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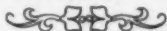
No. 3.



The Professional Prince

By Edgar Jepson

Author of "Ann," "The Admirable Tinker," etc.



CHAPTER I.

AND that's that," said the prince in a tone of profound melancholy.

James Bletsoe, his accomplished valet and major-domo, surveyed with disgusted eyes the pile of socks and the pile of ties, all of different, delicate colors, that lay on the bed.

The prince's uniform of a colonel of dragoons, in which he had been attending that morning's levee and out of which Bletsoe had just helped him, lay across a chair in the corner. The prince was clad in shirt, a collar, and the trousers of the new suit he was bent on wearing that afternoon. His feet were bare. His toilet had come to a standstill because, out of the fifty ties and pairs of socks heaped on the bed, they had been unable to find a tie and a pair of socks that matched perfectly the new suit.

"Suddenly the valet's distinguished face, a face such as you might find on a coin unearthed among the ruins of some ancient city, grew brighter and he said:

"One minute, your highness. I may be able to find something yet."

He caught up the jacket of the new suit and hurried from the room.

The prince turned, surveyed his face in the mirror with melancholy disfavor, murmured, "Oh, my ancestral mug!" and gazed out of the window. His fine dark-blue eyes retained the mournfulness of one to whom unkind Fortune has dealt a cruel blow.

The royal families of Europe and their faithful counselors alike are stirred to the depth of their beings when the Stuart blood, which runs but thinly in most royal veins, suddenly displays itself in its full richness in some exceptional prince or princess. The members of the chancelleries, with their working knowledge of the unreported history of the courts of Europe for the last hundred years, were assured that the high-spirited, but astute waywardness with which the prince baffled their schemes for his establishment in marriage with one or other of the princesses they desired to place advantageously was the fruit of the full richness with which that Stuart blood ran in his veins.

It was a further grievance to them that, in spite of his real gift for mischief, he could, in the matter of un-

smiling solemnity, give cards and spades to the owl, or even the graver, but extinct, dodo. With cold unanimity they gave it, secretly, as their reasoned opinion that he was a reversion to the type, not of King Charles the martyr, but of his much less revered son.

In less than three minutes, Bletsoe returned. His face wore an air of quiet satisfaction; he carried a pair of socks and a tie in his right hand.

The prince looked at them, his face brightened.

"That's it," he said. "My good chap, you're absolutely invaluable. You're not merely my right hand, but my right eye and right foot. I've always told you that your taste in ties is infinitely better than mine."

"I don't agree with your highness," said Bletsoe, smiling.

The prince had put on the socks when there entered to them, with the bustling fussiness with which he always moved about the world, the prince's equerry, Sir Horace Cheatle.

There was that in his appearance which made his bustling fussiness uncommonly appropriate to him. His small green eyes and small nose, which ended as a pink button mushroom, made but a poor show in so much round face. His parted lips and upcurving eyebrows gave him a perpetually startled air. He was portly and waddled.

Little as the formation of Sir Horace's brow and skull appeared to justify it, he enjoyed the reputation of being a man of sound common sense and exquisite tact. The stern aunt who—since both his father and his mother had died when he was nine years old—had regulated the prince's life till his twenty-first birthday, and who believed that she regulated it still, declared that her unbounded confidence in Sir Horace was founded on his possession of those qualities—and that settled it. Besides, Prince Richard himself never missed an occasion of prais-

ing his equerry for those qualities. He went further—he often declared that Sir Horace was priceless.

As his eyes studied the prince's face, Sir Horace's brow was furrowed by an anxious frown.

"You look tired, highness," he said.

"Tired? I've been bored to extinction for nearly two hours." The prince spoke in a voice of languid misery.

"I had quite an idea last night," announced Sir Horace.

The prince contrived to look incredulous without ceasing to look mournful.

"I was walking along Oxford Street —"

"Heavens, what an occupation!" the prince exclaimed softly.

"—when I met a young man."

"You're quite sure it wasn't a young woman?" asked the prince in a tone of sudden, acute anxiety.

"No, no, highness—a young man," Sir Horace repeated firmly.

"Good. I asked only on Lady Cheatle's account," said the prince in a tone of relief.

"There were young women there, of course," admitted Sir Horace thoughtfully.

"Philanderer!" said the prince in a tone of cold disgust.

"No, no; nothing of the kind, highness!" protested Sir Horace. "But the remarkable thing about the young man was that he bore the most striking resemblance to your highness."

"And I believed myself unique!" said the prince mournfully. "But of course all men have their doubles. Fortunate men never meet them."

"Yes, yes, they must have. But it occurred to me that it would be an immense advantage if we could utilize that extraordinary likeness so as to spare your highness some of the fatigues incident to your exalted station—a function like this morning's levee, now," said Sir Horace.

"But it *was* an idea!" murmured the prince with an astonished air.

Bletsoe looked at Sir Horace with a sudden expression of disquiet.

"Yes; I thought that if he could be hired to take your place on occasion, it would be very useful. I felt it so strongly that I spoke to him." Sir Horace paused.

Of a sudden, the last of the cloud cleared from the prince's face, and it filled with the liveliest animation. So did James Bletsoe's, but with animation of a different kind.

"At first he actually seemed to think I was some kind of a swindler," Sir Horace went on with a faint, aggrieved laugh.

"A singularly simple soul," said the prince.

"Yes, he seemed so," Sir Horace agreed.

Bletsoe was looking at him with an expression of growing consternation.

"He lives at Sudbury, and his name is John Stuart."

"And that's that!" said the prince in accents of profound conviction. In Half Moon Street and certain other places, he himself was known as "Mr. John Stuart."

Bletsoe was gazing at Sir Horace with an expression of amazed horror.

"He seems thoroughly dissatisfied with his position as a clerk in the Welsh Widows' Insurance Company, at one hundred and thirty pounds a year, and keen on making more money—very keen. Also, I think that he's a bit of a snob. So I've come to the conclusion that he could be hired occasionally—only in the evenings, of course, because of his business—to relieve your highness from some function that you would find wearisome," said Sir Horace in a tone of satisfaction.

"I fancy—I fancy—that I see a trifle more in it than that." The prince spoke with half-closed eyes, because he did not wish the bright light of mischief

shining in them to give his faithful equerry the alarm. "I had better see the young man and discuss the matter with him myself."

Sir Horace Cheattle's face fell. "But would that be quite discreet, highness?" he asked. "Wouldn't it be better to leave the arrangements to me?"

The prince said quickly:

"No, no. After all, he is my double, and I must see him. Besides, it will be perfectly safe. With your sound common sense, it's quite impossible that you should have got into touch with any one dangerous—a blackmailer, or anything of that kind, my Horace."

"Oh, no. I can answer for that. He's a most respectable young fellow."

"Then it's safe," said the prince cheerfully. "Bring him round to Half Moon Street at half past six to-night, and we'll talk to him—you and I together."

Sir Horace Cheattle prided himself greatly on a few unimportant things; one of them was his punctuality. Indeed, he owed some of the esteem in which he was held by the stern aunt of the prince to his aphorism, his only aphorism:

"If punctuality is the politeness of kings, it is a necessity in their servants."

At half past six to the minute, therefore, Sir Horace knocked at the door of the house in Half Moon Street where the prince spent so much more of his time than at his suite of rooms in the palace, which he often and ungratefully described as his offices, since from them he attended levees, parades, and other functions distasteful to him.

Bletsoe himself opened the door, for at the house in Half Moon Street he acted as major-domo to the prince, and he had sent Henry Cleveland, the footman, down to his pantry, partly because he thought it well that he should know nothing about Mr. John Stuart.

But, also, Bletsoe was eager to assure himself at the earliest possible moment

that Sir Horace had exaggerated the likeness, and that it would not serve the prince's purpose. He was keenly disappointed; his first glance at Mr. John Stuart, who stood beside Sir Horace on the threshold, assured him that he was the veritable double of the prince. Bletsoe believed, indeed, that he himself would never mistake one for the other, together or apart. But he saw clearly that Sir Horace might do so every time. In fact, he could not think of more than three people—ladies—who would not be deceived by the likeness.

Mr. John Stuart's brow had not quite the breadth of the prince's; his dark-blue eyes were not of quite as dark a blue. He wore a different air, also—a somewhat defiant, dour air, very unlike the easy, assured air of the prince. At the moment, he looked unlikely to smile ever—as if, indeed, a smile were an indulgence he never allowed himself. But, apart from these trifles, the likeness was wonderful. Bletsoe's heart sank, and his face fell.

"Is his highness in?" Sir Horace asked somewhat anxiously.

"Yes, Sir Horace," said Bletsoe gloomily. "He's in the smoking room."

"Come along, Mr. Stuart, come along," said Sir Horace fussily. "And you may expect, as I told you, to be surprised—greatly surprised."

He waddled quickly up the rather narrow staircase, the walls of which were hung with old prints—all the portraits of all the Stuarts that had ever been engraved—and knocked at the right-hand door on the first-floor landing. The voice of the prince bade him come in. He opened the door, waved to Mr. John Stuart to precede him, followed him into the room, and announced in a tone of some triumph:

"Mr. Stuart, your highness."

The prince rose from a deep easy-chair and bowed.

"How do you do, Mr. Stuart?" he said.

Mr. Stuart bowed or, rather, bobbed and murmured that he was very well and very pleased to meet the prince. The two young men gazed steadily at each other. Both of them were prepared for the likeness, but both of them were taken aback by its completeness. Then on either face appeared an expression of puzzled resentment. It is to be feared that Prince Richard and John Stuart took a dislike to each other on the spot.

The prince recovered himself and said:

"Won't you sit down, Mr. Stuart? The likeness is indeed wonderful."

John Stuart chose with care the least comfortable chair in the room, sat down on it in an austere, bolt-upright position, with his hands on his knees, and gazed around with the stern, confident eyes of a man of whom no unfair advantage shall be taken.

"I take it that Sir Horace has told you his idea that you should relieve me of some of my more tiresome—occupations?" asked the prince.

"Yes, your highness," said John Stuart.

"Well, what do you think of it? Do you think you would like to try it?"

"It depends," said John Stuart with stern caution. "I'm not saying that I'm unequal to it—no. But it will be difficult—very difficult; and I'm the only man who can do it."

"Oh, let's hope that there are more of us. Give the world a chance," said the prince hopefully. "But I don't think that you will find it so difficult. Mine is not an observant family."

"The difference in the voices will be very difficult to get over, your highness," said Bletsoe, who still stood by the door, in a tone of considerable satisfaction.

"You always were a pessimist, Bletsoe. Is the difference so very great, Sir Horace?" the prince inquired anxiously.

"There is a difference. Mr. Stuart's voice is harsher than your highness'," acknowledged Sir Horace.

"Surely you mean to say that my voice is softer than Mr. Stuart's," the prince corrected him, with hasty tactfulness.

"Yes, yes, of course, highness. That's what I meant," said Sir Horace with equal haste.

"Well, surely we can get over that with practice," said the prince. "I can harden my voice, while Mr. Stuart softens his. I should think you could manage that, Mr. Stuart?"

"A soft voice would be no use to me in business, but of course I could do it," said John Stuart. "But that's only a little difficulty. It's the work I'm thinking of, the hard work of acquiring so many new accomplishments."

"But I have no accomplishments!" cried the prince in a horror-stricken tone. "I've always avoided accomplishments. You can't call fencing an accomplishment."

"But there'll be the matter of etiquette," John Stuart went on with unbending sternness, and again he gazed around with challenging eyes. "I'm a plain man——"

"Oh, don't say that! It reflects on me," protested the prince in a pained voice.

"I'm a plain man, your highness," insisted John Stuart, "the son of plain parents. They gave me a sound commercial education. They did not train me for the brilliant life of courts."

"Brilliant? Oh, my hat!" murmured the prince.

Suddenly his face brightened, and his eyes rested on John Stuart with the caressing gaze with which they so often rested on Sir Horace Cheate.

"It would be a severe mental labor to a serious man of business to acquire these trivial graces," said John Stuart. "The books there'll be to read!"

"There isn't a book on court etiquette

that I ever heard of," said the prince in a comforting tone. "Sir Horace will teach you the whole of it in a single course of lessons."

"All the same, it will be severe mental labor," insisted John Stuart. "That, and the fact that I have a monopoly value, entitles me to expect a handsome remuneration for my services."

"Tut, tut, you can leave——" began Sir Horace in a tone of some disapproval.

"I see your point, Mr. Stuart," the prince broke in quickly. "And what do you consider a handsome remuneration?"

"For putting all my evenings at your highness' disposal, I ought to be engaged at a salary—a yearly salary of a—a hundred pounds," said John Stuart, and he looked around with a faint anxiety in his stern eyes to see whether he had asked too much.

"A hundred a year for your evenings?" said the prince slowly. "And how much for all your time?"

James Bletsoe heaved a deep, despairing sigh.

"All my time?" John Stuart repeated heavily, taken aback. "Why—why—I'm receiving a hundred and thirty pounds a year, with a ten-pound rise. That would be two hundred and thirty. But—but—there'd be no prospects—no prospects at all."

"That would have to be taken into account," the prince agreed. "But your salary would be in addition to your expenses—all your expenses, which I should pay."

John Stuart looked startled and bewildered and troubled. His mind was not one to adjust itself quickly to a new idea. It had been quite filled—to the brim, indeed—with the idea of one hundred pounds.

He looked painfully from one to the other; then he said:

"Why—why—I could save it all."

"Well, nearly all," said the prince. "And I've no doubt that I could find you a post of some kind when, if ever, I no longer required your services."

A slow brightness spread over the face of John Stuart.

"I'll give you four hundred a year," offered the prince.

John Stuart smiled. It was not the charming and delightful smile of the prince; indeed, it looked as if it hurt.

"I accept, your highness!" he said as quickly as ever he had said anything in his life; and his tone was enthusiastic.

"Good. That's settled," said the prince cheerfully, and he smiled. "You'll put yourself in the hands of Sir Horace and Bletsoe. Sir Horace will teach you etiquette and Bletsoe—er—deportment."

"I'll work, your highness," John Stuart promised. "I can work. And I've a singularly retentive memory."

"Lucky fellow! I haven't," said the prince. "By the way, Sir Horace will also teach you the correct smile. You will learn to relax the muscles of your face a little more. You will show him how, Sir Horace?"

"Certainly, highness—certainly," said Sir Horace readily.

"And tact? Your exquisite tact," went on the prince. "You'll—er—er—impart that to him?"

Sir Horace looked at John Stuart somewhat doubtfully.

"I'll try, highness," he said. "But I—er—have a theory that tact is—er—that the tactful man, like the poet, is born, not made."

"Perhaps—perhaps," said the prince. "Bletsoe will show you the rooms you will occupy here, Mr. Stuart. But most of the time you will occupy my suite at the palace, I hope. You had better come to Sir Horace's house, 71b Hans Crescent, at half past ten to-morrow morning. I suppose you can arrange with your insurance company to leave

at once, for your salary will begin as soon as all your time is at my disposal."

"The Welsh Widows may go——" John Stuart began, and checked himself. "The Welsh Widows never appreciated me, and, I owe it nothing, your highness. I should be a fool to let it stand in my way. I'll be there."

"Good. Mr. Stuart would like a whisky and soda after all this talking, Bletsoe. Good evening, Mr. Stuart."

"Good evening, your highness, good evening," said John Stuart, and he left the room briskly.

"A young fellow of sterling worth," said the prince with enthusiasm, when Bletsoe had shut the door.

"Yes, highness," said Sir Horace, but his tone was not happy. "I never thought for a moment you'd take all his time," he added, and there was a sudden uneasiness in his eyes.

"But think how useful it will be! Think of the boredom it will save me!" cried the prince, with warm enthusiasm. Then he added quickly: "Think merely of the Princess Frieda."

"The Princess Frieda?" The uneasiness in Sir Horace's tone and eyes deepened.

"You know she's coming from her cold northern home to win my heart, and I shall be expected to make love to her. And you know how bad I am at that kind of thing."

"I wish I did!" groaned his now crimson mentor, shaken out of his tactfulness, and he stared at the prince with eyes in which uneasiness had given place to horror.

"I'm quite hopeless at it—quite," said the prince with profound, sad conviction. "Besides, from what I hear, and from her photograph, her face is disfigured by a scar."

"It's only a little disfigured—a very little. She's charming—charming!" cried Sir Horace.

"All princesses are," said the prince.

"But what struck me about this young fellow you have provided me with was that he is worthy, and a worthy young fellow very properly believes beauty to be skin deep. A little thing like a scar won't affect him in the slightest, and with your help and instruction, he'll make love like—like—a house on fire."

"But your highness lets your imagination run away with you! You don't pause to consider! Suppose—suppose they fell in love with each other?" cried Sir Horace, and his words tumbled over one another.

"I can't imagine a princess falling in love with a prince. It's never done," said the prince firmly. "It's almost certain that she cherishes a romantic and incurable passion for some fair-haired young viking—an officer of the Swedish Guards. They always do."

"Oh, don't be cynical in a serious matter like this, highness!" Sir Horace implored. "Suppose they did fall in love with each other?"

"Then I should never think for a moment of spoiling love's young dream," said the prince with a generous air.

Sir Horace stared at him with hurried eyes; then a faint gleam of hope brightened them as he said:

"But your highness doesn't really mean it?"

"I do mean it—I mean it very strongly," said the prince stiffly and with decision. "I told you you hadn't grasped all the possibilities of your magnificent idea."

CHAPTER II.

For a day or two, the prince seemed to take it for granted that his instructions were being carried out with efficiency and dispatch. He said no word about John Stuart; but he did not fail to observe that Sir Horace waddled the world with a deeply preoccupied air,

and that Bletsoe at times appeared a little worried.

In truth, with all the will in the world to become quickly the accomplished earner of four hundred a year, John Stuart was not an apt pupil. A strong sense of his immense importance in the scheme of the universe and the untiring exhortations of his earnest parents had disposed him from his boyhood to give his attention only to serious things; and the acquisition of the minutiae of etiquette and of fashionable manners came hard to his strenuous mind. It was a full week before Bletsoe could be sure that he would not shoot his cuffs or, on sitting down, twitch up the legs of his trousers to the level demanded by thrift and not mere comfort.

Then the prince began to take an interest in the lessons in deportment, and seconded Bletsoe's efforts. Above all, he took a great interest in his pupil's smile. He would himself smile the pattern smile for half an hour at a time—he was helped to retain it for so long on his face by the facial contortions of his pupil—while John Stuart labored to imitate it. It was hard for him to find the mean between a corpse-like grin that bared his teeth and the wide, toothless, benignant smile of the Cheshire cat.

The prince was sure that he was doing a good work, and he never tired of it. He caused John Stuart to remove from Sudbury to two rooms on the ground floor of the house in Half Moon Street, and there he would descend on him at any hour between noon and midnight, and they would smile diligently at each other. When the smiling muscles of his pupil were plainly aching from this unaccustomed exercise, the prince would allow him to rest for a while, and chat with him amiably on subjects taken from the *Daily Wire* leaders, John Stuart's favorite reading.

Conversing thus one morning, the prince idly turned the talk on personal matters.

"Have you any relations, Mr. Stuart?" he asked.

"My parents are dead, but I have five uncles, three aunts, twenty-nine cousins, and a sister, your highness," said John Stuart simply.

"And are they all in the North?"

"All except my sister, and I don't know where she is," John Stuart frowned.

"Ah, she has emigrated?" the prince inquired politely.

"Worse than that, your highness. She's gone on the stage," said John Stuart in a tone of stern disapproval, and the frown deepened.

"In musical comedy, doubtless?"

"Yes, your highness," admitted John Stuart, scowling.

The prince was a little taken aback. Politeness had led him to suggest that the young lady occupied a position on the very peaks of the drama. Now he found it difficult to imagine a sister of John Stuart adorning that height.

"You take an interest in her career?" he asked amiably.

"None at all, your highness. She has been most unsatisfactory."

"Indeed?" said the prince in a sympathetic tone.

"Yes. I got her an excellent position as a typist in Sheffield at a pound a week. She spent all the money she could save on lessons in elocution and stage dancing, and finally left Sheffield with a theatrical company. It was a blow—a great blow to all of us." His voice was bitter.

"Perhaps it was her vocation," the prince suggested hopefully.

"There cannot be a vocation in such matters, your highness," said John Stuart firmly.

"I have met several ladies who said that there was."

"It's all vanity—the passion for no-

toriety, your highness," said John Stuart with the gloomiest conviction.

"Perhaps—perhaps," the prince agreed amiably. "Is she very old?"

"No; she's very young, your highness."

"Young and in musical comedy—strange!" said the prince.

"She's twenty-one, your-highness."

"I've never met one less than thirty-five," said the prince. "Do you often see her?"

"I haven't seen her for a year, your highness. I left my address here for her at Sudbury, so she knows where to find me. But I doubt that I was wise. I've always felt that sooner or later she would be a drag on me."

"Smile, Mr. Stuart! Smile!" the prince ordered sharply. "You're not looking genial."

"Genial?" said John Stuart bitterly, and by a violent effort he produced one of his most corpse-like grins.

The prince shuddered, hastily bade him good day, and went to his club.

The next morning the prince was breakfasting in his dining room at the palace, with Bletsoe in attendance, when Sir Horace Cheattle waddled into the room. The prince greeted him cheerfully.

"Stuart is quite ready to relieve me of some of my duties," he announced.

Sir Horace received the assertion with a wriggle of discomfort.

"As long as it is something that does not demand any of the more delicate intricacies of etiquette," he said doubtfully.

"What do you think, Bletsoe?" asked the prince.

"His manners would pass in the provinces, your highness," said Bletsoe confidently.

"Good! He shall relieve me of my provincial work," the prince declared in a tone of great satisfaction.

"It will be good practice for him, your highness," said Bletsoe.

"There's my visit to Ledford the day after to-morrow. I forget what I'm going to open. I don't want to travel to Ledford in June, or see its hardy citizens perspiring freely. You know how frightfully hot a town gets whenever I open anything in it. I'm sure, too, that it's the kind of work that appeals to John Stuart's sterling worth."

"He could do it as far as his manners are concerned, your highness," said Bletsoe.

"And the etiquette is quite simple," put in Sir Horace.

"Then he goes," the prince decided.

John Stuart started for Ledford in the high spirits of a man who has really come into his own. Both Sir Horace and Bletsoe went with him, and he was affable to both of them in a large, royal way. It was unusual for Bletsoe to travel in the same compartment with the prince. But the prince had bidden him travel in the same compartment with John Stuart lest Sir Horace should upset him by too many final, flustering instructions. Sir Horace was, indeed, in a condition of nervous fussiness for which there was no reason whatever.

John Stuart perceived it, and spent some time making it clear to Sir Horace that there was no cause for nervousness, since he was about to discharge a function natural to his character. Then for an hour he read the *Daily Wire* earnestly, while Bletsoe read the *Morning Post* and Sir Horace the *Daily Telegraph*.

When John Stuart had finished reading, he said with a somewhat superior, challenging air:

"I believe the *Daily Wire* to be the most up-to-date paper in England."

"I shouldn't wonder," Bletsoe assented carelessly.

"I prefer the tone of the *Daily Telegraph*," said Sir Horace.

Thereupon, John Stuart talked to them seriously, heavily, out of the *Daily Wire*, giving them all he could remember of its leaders as his own reasoned opinions, telling them scraps of news they had already read in their own papers. He seemed now able to talk without any help at all from them. Indeed, he seemed an insistent talker. They had never suspected it. In his effort to soften his voice to the tone of that of the prince, he had acquired a somewhat monotonous intonation. They found that so much of it had a soporific, even a slightly dazing effect. But Sir Horace was impressed; he thought John Stuart an uncommonly well-informed young man. The more skeptical Bletsoe suspected the origin of his wisdom.

After he had exhausted the fount of his inspiration, John Stuart fell silent. Both of them were careful not to set him talking again.

As the prince's valet, Bletsoe was able to be on hand to keep a watchful, studying eye on him at lunch and to note several slight improvements that might be made in his table manners. He did not like the gusto with which John Stuart took his soup, since a good appetite is a human weakness that royal personages seldom permit themselves to reveal at public banquets, and he was a little alarmed by the uncompromising vigor with which his charge punished the wines and the liqueurs of the corporation; he feared their effect on the coming speech, though he was forced to admit that they relaxed the muscles of the pseudo prince's face so that he could smile a smile that was merely moderately stiff.

He observed that the mayor, to whom John Stuart talked throughout the lunch, appeared troubled in spirit. It was not, in the circumstances, to be wondered at. Perceiving clearly that he was in a position of vantage, that both etiquette and loyalty compelled

the mayor's closest attention, John Stuart seriously and heavily poured into his ear the reasoned opinions on the burning question of the week that he had gathered from the leader in the *Daily Wire*.

Unfortunately, the mayor's mental sustenance for over thirty years had been the wisdom and the wit of its gentle rival, the *Daily News*. This strange, strong fodder was quite unpalatable to him, and that evening, in the bosom of his family, after lauding the charm and *bonhomie* and intelligence of John Stuart to the skies, he observed that it was nevertheless fortunate for the country that Prince Richard was not in the direct succession to the throne, since his political views were far from sound.

Bletsoe need have been in no fear as to the speech. John Stuart delivered it with such an air of being pleased with himself, his occupation, his company, his surroundings, that every loyal citizen of Ledford who heard it was convinced that he must be the greatest royal orator in Europe.

After it, John Stuart admitted that it and the heat had made him very thirsty; but two whiskies and sodas refreshed him so that he left Ledford smiling stiffly without an effort.

There being no longer any reason why Bletsoe should be in the same compartment, he traveled peaceably farther down the train, whiling away the journey with the excellent cigars of the Corporation of Ledford. But Sir Horace congratulated John Stuart warmly on his success. He was again proud of having discovered him.

John Stuart received his congratulations affably for about a mile; then of a sudden his face was clouded with gloom, and he said in a bitterly aggrieved tone:

"It ought to have been my prerogative to knight that mayor!"

CHAPTER III.

The prince showed the greatest interest in John Stuart's first essay in relieving him of a tiresome duty. He came home early to receive Sir Horace's report, and, later, as he dressed for dinner, he questioned Bletsoe with the same care and thoroughness.

He seemed most impressed by John Stuart's weighty converse, especially by the fact, which he learned from Sir Horace, that he had firmly impressed his views on the Mayor of Ledford.

"But this is perfectly splendid!" he cried at last, almost with enthusiasm. "If this fellow goes on boring people like this, I shall obtain a magnificent reputation."

"It will certainly be a different one, your highness," said Bletsoe, without enthusiasm.

"But it's quite all right," said the prince. "You don't understand. These people never even guess that they're being bored."

He was not in the habit of letting the grass grow under his feet, and after breakfast the next morning, he lighted a cigar and sent Bletsoe to ask John Stuart to be so good as to come to him. John Stuart was not in a good temper; for all his iron head, the wines, spirits, and liqueurs of the Corporation of Ledford had not been without their effect on him. He laid aside the *Daily Wire* and went moodily. The bow with which he prefaced his "Good morning, your highness" was almost painfully stiff.

The prince bade him help himself to a cigar and sit down in an easy-chair by the fireplace, some way from the window by which he was himself sitting. He still felt a repulsion from his double, which he made no effort to overcome, since it was beyond reason. It ruffled some inner sense that John Stuart should be so like him and Charles II. He put him in the shadow

so that the likeness should not be too clear.

"I hear that you discharged your duties in a quite satisfactory fashion yesterday, Mr. Stuart," said the prince.

He had already divined that warm praise would not be good for a young man who esteemed himself as highly as did his worthy double.

"Yes, your highness," said John Stuart somewhat coldly.

He was regarding the prince with envious eyes and a sense of injury. He felt more strongly than ever that some power had wronged him, that, by virtue of his sterling qualities, he ought to be the real prince. He was sure that the prince was frivolous.

"There's one thing, though. Another time you must not drink so much. In a manufacturing town in the Midlands, like Ledford, it doesn't matter. The mayor and corporation would rather like you for it. But as a rule we make a point of being rather abstemious. Sir Horace ought to have told you. But another time you'll know."

"Yes, your highness," said John Stuart with a sudden deepening of his gloom.

A cup, or, rather, to be exact, several cups, had been dashed from his lips.

"Well, I've come to the conclusion that you're sufficiently rehearsed in your part to try a little more delicate work. To-morrow you will lunch at the palace. And I chiefly wanted to speak to you about the talk at lunch. You probably perceive that the less you say, the better."

"Yes, your highness," said John Stuart readily.

"Most of the talk will be about people and incidents about which you know nothing. If you are asked any questions, you will, of course, use your judgment about saying 'yes' or 'no' or making an evasive reply. Are you good at evasive replies?"

"I don't think so, your highness."

He was now giving the prince his most earnest attention.

"I wonder whether Sir Horace could give you a lesson in them. With his exquisite tact, he ought to be an expert in evasive replies. I generally am when I'm being tactful," said the prince thoughtfully. "When he comes, I'll send him down to you to give you a lesson."

"Thank you, your highness," said John Stuart gratefully. Then he added in an apologetic tone: "In the lower branches of the insurance business, there is very little opening for diplomacy."

"I don't think you'll find the lunch any great strain," the prince encouraged him. "In this world, most people want to do the talking themselves. It's easy to keep silence—an attentive silence."

"Oh, yes, your highness," said John Stuart in a tone of some disappointment.

He had seen himself shining, by solid merit, in the royal circle.

"But if you have to talk—talk exactly as you talked to the Mayor of Ledford yesterday," said the prince. "It will be appreciated."

John Stuart's face grew suddenly much brighter, and he said quickly:

"I will, your highness."

The prince was silent. He seemed to be pondering. Then he said:

"Yes. That's all I can think of at the moment. But I'm pleased to see that you take your new profession really seriously."

John Stuart rose, bowed, and went to the door.

As he was going out, the prince called:

"Oh, by the way, you're not expected to kiss my aunt. I don't."

"Yes, your highness." There was relief in his tone.

He had not been gone long when Sir Horace arrived.

The prince listened to the expression of his satisfaction, and applauded his excellent work with John Stuart. Then he told him that he would have a further opportunity of exercising his admirable talents when he lunched at the palace on the morrow with that worthy and accomplished young fellow.

Sir Horace was taken aback. He would have been quite content to rest on his laurels for a fortnight before attempting a more serious operation. He began to protest. He found the prince, as he had so often found him before, suave, but quite determined.

"But you are quite wrong, my Horace," said the prince amiably. "My near relations do not know me at all well. Princess Anne every now and then makes a good guess, an extraordinarily good guess, at what I am really thinking, or feeling, or attempting. But she is the soul of discretion, and never dreams of informing any one but me of those guesses."

"She is remarkably clever, highness," Sir Horace agreed with warm enthusiasm.

"It isn't her cleverness that's really important. It's her womanliness. That's where her frequently amazing power of intuition comes from," said the prince, in a gently corrective tone.

"Yes, highness, that's exactly what I mean."

"And that's what makes her such a splendid ally. She knows exactly when to make excuses for me and when to let those who are abusing me talk themselves out," the prince continued. "And I owe to her the useful and generally accepted theory in the home circle that really, in spite of all my displays of genuine original sin, I'm merely eccentric. But for her, I should have been dispatched on a perfectly horrid journey round the world. Think of opening something at Singapore!"

"I should have thought your highness would have liked to see the world."

"In my own way, yes, not officially. But to attempt to hide from the Princess Anne's womanly intuition that I and John Stuart are two would be the most foolish waste of labor. Not that I propose to help her in any way to make the discovery. All things in their season, don't you know? But the rest of my family, as you have heard me say before, are not observant people—at least so far as I am concerned. By the way, I've been talking to John Stuart about to-morrow"—Sir Horace groaned faintly at the realization that this hazardous exploit was definitely arranged—"and I've told him that you will give him a course of lessons in evasive replies."

"Evasive replies?" repeated Sir Horace faintly.

"Yes. There'll be dozens of allusions to things Stuart won't know anything about, and he'll be asked dozens of questions about them. A man of your sound common sense must see that."

Sir Horace's teeth chattered faintly, and the rich red of his complexion was dull.

"You won't be able to prompt him every time, and since he has hardly a ready wit and lacks your exquisite tact, his evasive replies ought to be cut and dried beforehand."

"But how am I to think of the hundreds of evasive replies that may be necessary, highness? Think of the incalculable number of questions that may be asked!" cried Sir Horace in a panic.

"Oh, that's all right. The same evasive reply will answer a dozen different questions," the prince reassured him. "I think you had better arrange them into classes. Why, consider. Nearly every unimportant question can be answered by saying: 'I really can't remember at the moment.' And it's so beautifully true; Stuart won't be able to remember at the moment, or any other moment, for that matter."

"It is a good answer, highness," acknowledged Sir Horace, in a tone of faint hope.

He sighed, and went upstairs to John Stuart's sitting room. He found him sternly learning by heart the more invigorating sentences in the leader of the *Daily Wire*.

They were soon at work. Sir Horace carefully ransacked his memory for questions he had heard members of the royal circle ask the prince. John Stuart wrote them down as he recalled them, and then they devised and discussed an answer to each.

Just before lunch, the prince himself came to learn what progress they were making, and congratulated them on their methods.

As he went out of the room, he paused to say:

"It's wonderful to think that I should have given my country a new type of professional man."

"What type, highness?" asked Sir Horace.

"The professional prince," said his highness, and left them.

CHAPTER IV.

Sir Horace came to Half Moon Street early next morning, and spent the morning preparing John Stuart for the enterprise.

Just before they started, the prince came down to them. He found John Stuart ready to set out in a spirit of cold resolution that made him look dourer than ever. The mournful, hen-pecked air of Sir Horace pleased him even less.

He drew his equerry out into the hall and said in a tone of the coldest severity:

"It's no use Stuart's looking and acting his part with splendid firmness if you excite suspicion by looking like a dyspeptic mute at a funeral. They'll see that something is wrong, they'll

start hunting for it, and before you know where you are, they'll find out what it is."

"I'll do my best, highness," promised Sir Horace, with the air of a molting fowl.

"Your best! I want a great deal better than your best!" the prince cried almost with ferocity. Then he added: "I tell you what—there's only one thing for you."

"What, highness?" Sir Horace spoke with the air of a drowning man clutching at a straw.

"Hectic gayety."

"Hectic—gayety?" moaned Sir Horace.

"Yes," said the prince with stern decision. "You must introduce a note of hectic gayety into this lunch. They won't know it is hectic. They'll think it's just ordinary cheerfulness. Babble gayety. Begin in the car. If you can talk from here to the palace with hectic gayety to my chuckleheaded substitute, you'll be able to keep it up for twenty-four hours without an effort."

Sir Horace gasped.

The prince opened the door of the sitting room.

"Come along, Mr. Stuart," he said. "It's time you were off."

John Stuart came forth, stiff, upright, smiling a deathly smile. The prince followed them to the front door. Bletsoe, impassive, noncommittal, opened it.

As they crossed the threshold, the prince said wistfully:

"I'd give anything to be there."

Sir Horace found the aspiration in no way reassuring.

When the brougham stopped at the palace, John Stuart descended from it with the air of a conqueror and snuffed up the breeze like a war horse scenting battle. Sir Horace was almost knock-kneed with emotion.

At the top of the first flight of stairs, the groom of the chambers received

them, led them to the door of a drawing-room on the left, opened it, and announced them. Sir Horace drew back, and John Stuart entered with an appalling smile.

There were six people in the room—the stern aunt of the prince, the Princess Anne, an elderly lady in waiting, a young lady in waiting, and the Earl and Countess of Oxenham. The carefully primed John Stuart recognized all of them from the descriptions given him by Sir Horace or from photographs that Sir Horace had shown him, and he greeted each in the fashion Sir Horace had prescribed. The painfulness of his appalling smile surprised no one. The prince's aversion to the domesticities was well known.

With a brilliant effort, Sir Horace drew their attention from it to himself by relating a facetious anecdote. They were still smiling at it when the large, gilt Second Empire clock on the variegated brown marble mantelpiece chimed, then struck the half hour. A footman threw open the door, and the groom of the chambers announced that lunch was served.

They moved, in their proper order of precedence, to a dining room on the other side of the corridor. There they took their seats at a round table, and John Stuart found himself facing the stern aunt of the prince, with the Countess of Oxenham on his right and the elderly lady in waiting, Lady Maud Petersham, on his left. It seemed to him that it was an advantage that the Princess Anne, on the other side of the Countess of Oxenham, was not in a position to enjoy a good view of him. He was aware that the loss was hers. But it was better so. Both the prince and Sir Horace had warned him to have as little as possible to do with her, since she was by far the most likely person to discover that he and the prince were two. He drew himself up and looked proudly around the table. He

felt that, intellectually, he held them all in the hollow of his hand.

Mindful of his recent instructions not to make a display of his fine appetite when representing the prince, he took his soup slowly, with an air of cold indifference that would have lacerated the heart of the sensitive chef had he been there to observe it. All the while, he was watching the conversation with the most jealous attention, looking eagerly for an opportunity to display his own intellectual powers.

He missed two openings for lack of quickness. The quicker Sir Horace, with hectic gaiety, seized both of them, and was facetious. John Stuart wondered hotly how long he would be able to restrain himself from wringing his volatile tutor's short neck. His bitterness toward him was immeasurable.

While he was looking for his opening, he had been asked four questions—two by the aunt of the prince, two by the Princess Anne—about matters of which he was utterly ignorant, and had dealt with them in a manner that he felt to be masterly. He was burning to display his finer talents.

At last the opening came with the savory. It was an excellent, somewhat intriguing savory, and the others, giving it the attention it deserved, were silent. For the moment, it even stemmed the hectic gaiety of Sir Horace.

John Stuart began with a weighty remark from the leader of yesterday's *Daily Wire*. Every eye rose from the savory and regarded him. On the instant, the hectic gaiety of Sir Horace was to the fore, and he was facetious. John Stuart ignored him, following the first weighty remark with another. He was started; he went on. Every one was listening to him, all ears. It encouraged him. A scowl, the royal ferocity of which the prince himself could never hope to emulate, crushed Sir Horace, attempting again to be face-

tious. Presently the Earl of Oxenham said a few words in agreement with the ripe English sentiments falling from John Stuart's lips; the aunt of the prince did the same. He was now in his full stride.

He caught the eye of the Princess Anne as she leaned forward, regarding him with admiring wonder. He had an odd feeling that, had she not been a princess of royal blood, she would have winked at him. It was strange, but he was too firmly set on his course to be perturbed. He went on.

At the end of half an hour, the faces of the little party had changed. They did not look bored; they looked like people endeavoring conscientiously to follow a sermon well above their heads. The leaders of the *Daily Wire* are strong meat.

It is likely that John Stuart would have continued to instruct and impress his patient audience till tea time had not the stern aunt of the prince interrupted him by rising from her chair.

With her snow-white hair and hawk-like face, she might have looked like an eighteenth-century princess of France had her dressmaker realized her possibilities.

"I'm sorry to interrupt you, Richard—especially as I have never heard you talk such common sense before—about such interesting questions, too," she said in a tone of genuine regret. "But I have to go down to Stepney Hospital, and it's nearly time to start."

John Stuart was pleased—not unduly pleased; he knew his solid worth—but it was gratifying to find his just expectations realized. With a great air, he took his leave of the party. Again, as he shook hands with the Princess Anne, he had the strange feeling that had she not been a princess of royal blood, she would have winked at him. It was, indeed, an absurd feeling. It was almost to suspect her of not taking his excellent harangue seriously.

Sir Horace led John Stuart to the prince's suite of rooms, which were in the most pleasant part of the palace. Then he went briskly to the telephone and rang up the house in Half Moon Street. Bletsoe answered the call, and insisted on hearing how things had gone before he called the prince. Sir Horace set his mind at rest, and he summoned the prince.

The prince put the receiver to his ear and asked languidly:

"That you, my Horace? How did it go?"

"Excellently, highness—excellently! No one suspected anything—not even the Princess Anne," Sir Horace assured him enthusiastically.

"Did he talk seriously to them?"

"He talked very well indeed—ably, in fact—for upward of half an hour, developing most interesting views."

"They have my quite unneeded sympathy," said the prince.

"We shall be returning to Half Moon Street presently, highness. We're just smoking a quiet cigar after our labors. I shall be able to tell you all about it," said Sir Horace joyously.

"No, don't return. Stay where you are," the prince returned quickly.

"Stay where we are, highness?" repeated Sir Horace blankly.

"Yes. There's nothing like striking while the iron's hot. Keep him at the palace and show him over it—yes, and the gardens. Give him a lesson in the topography of the place—two or three lessons. Let the servants get used to him, and teach him their names—the names of those I know. And he'd better sleep there. Perhaps my aunt will send for him after breakfast, and they can finish their chat. He can deepen the good impression he's made. Be sure he gets his *Daily Wire*."

"Very well, highness," said Sir Horace mournfully.

The prince came away from the telephone smiling a smile of exquisite ami-

ability; he saw his way to a holiday of at least twenty-four hours.

He strolled to his club. There he found his amiable and accomplished friend the Earl of Bastable, the finest gentleman rider in England, in the smoking room, at a loose end. The earl received the news of the prince's holiday with much less enthusiasm than he would usually have shown. He seemed in low spirits, and when they began to discuss how the holiday should be spent, his interest seemed forced.

The prince tried to cheer him by infuriating his cousin, Prince Peter Augustus, whose favorite subject was the wave of socialism. He was easy to infuriate, and presented a pleasing spectacle in his rages, for he had a round, round head, a round red face, small light-blue eyes, closely cropped flaxen hair, and a small, very light mustache, on which he could never get a good enough grip to tug hard in moments of emotion.

He affected bluff, military manners, and was always offensive to the prince. The prince enticed him skillfully on to his subject and, when he had really warmed to it, proceeded to develop a theory that, when the wave of socialism had ceased its sweeping, Prince Peter Augustus would become the triangle player in a street band.

As always, the discussion ended by Prince Peter Augustus, now crimson, accusing him of flippancy and declaring that he was a traitor to his order. In the course of the next day or two, Prince Peter Augustus would complain to the stern aunt of the prince, and she would be angry and reproachful.

The prince was disappointed to observe that the cheerfulness engendered in the Earl of Bastable by this passage of arms soon wore off. They dressed at the club and went to the dinner they had so carefully ordered with good appetites. But even the dinner did not raise Lord Bastable's spirits.

At last the prince, tired of fruitless, indirect efforts to cheer his friend, said firmly:

"What on earth's the matter?"

Lord Bastable hesitated; then he said:

"It's a girl."

"A girl? Never!" cried the prince in the liveliest astonishment. "I thought you were immune—absolutely immune."

"So did I," said Lord Bastable despondently.

"But you don't mean to say that you're really in love?" asked the prince, still incredulous.

"It's something very like it," his friend acknowledged gloomily.

"But what's the trouble? Generally it's so nice to be in love. And to be in love for the first time—What on earth have you got to grouse about?"

"She won't have anything to do with me—not seriously. She won't even let me kiss her," said the Earl of Bastable in a dolorous voice.

"Oh, come! Does she know who you are?"

"Yes."

"She really knows about the Bastable millions, and she won't have anything to do with you?" The prince spoke in a tone of wonder. "Oh, I see—she isn't in the charmed circle."

"No. She has a small part—four lines and a song—in 'The Skating Girl,'" said Lord Bastable.

"But that's more extraordinary still! In musical comedy, and she won't have anything to do with you! But it's incredible!" cried the prince. "Whatever have you done to her?"

"It's my intentions," said Lord Bastable with some hesitation. "She doesn't think them serious enough."

"Well, then, it just rests with you. If you're truly and desperately in love with her, the sooner your intentions become serious, the sooner it will all be over."

"It's out of the question," said Lord Bastable despondently.

"Oh, come! Don't be so harsh with yourself. Let yourself go for once. The world well lost for love, don't you know? By the way, what's the cruel fair one's name?"

"Agatha Stuart."

"And that's that!" cried the prince in a tone of consternation.

"Why, do *you* know her?" Lord Bastable's eyes filled with doubt and suspicion.

"I do not, thank Heaven!" the prince exclaimed devoutly. "I know of her. I know her brother, and that's enough for me."

"It's extraordinary," said the Earl of Bastable.

"It's nothing of the kind. The longer I live, the smaller the world grows. I shall soon know every one in it."

"She has a strange nature," said Lord Bastable, and he sighed.

"Her brother hasn't. His is merely terrible."

At the music hall, the Earl of Bastable still talked of Agatha Stuart between the turns.

After supper a taxicab conveyed them to a block of expensive flats in the West End. They were well known to the footman, who ushered them forthwith into a charming double drawing-room, decorated by the most tasteful member of the firm of Storman & Wil-
low.

Mrs. Stallworthy-Miller, the lady of the house, tall, fair-haired, blue-eyed, and of a willowy figure, stepped forward quickly and received them with winning amiability; her bullet-headed, thick-necked, rubicund husband welcomed them with jovial, but slightly stertorous cheeriness. Naturally the prince was strictly "Mr. Stuart" at their flat; but Mr. Stallworthy-Miller knew very well who he was, and the sight of him warmed both his loyalty and his

business instinct. It was a great advantage to tell wealthy punters of the self-made brand in strictest confidence that princes of royal blood came to his little place—"Incognito, you know. Oh, quite incognito."

When the prince and the Earl of Bastable entered, eight people were already gathered round the green table in the farther room—one of the most charming Scotch generals who ever adorned an English drawing-room, an amiable Jewish banker of European reputation, a well-known lady novelist, a stout, hard-faced gentleman with a Northern burr, Mr. Stallworthy-Miller's latest friend from the Midlands, a stockbroker, a theatrical manager who also acted—senile, perhaps, but still resolved to be irresistible—and two young and knowing guardsmen.

The prince and the Earl of Bastable sat down side by side at the right of the banker. It was the prince's theory that in any game of chance he had to wait patiently on Fortune, who would at first and for a long while frown coldly on him. He had come, indeed, to regard a gambling bout as a trial of endurance between himself and the goddess; draw it out long enough and in the end he would wear out her unkindness and she would smile on him. So he played quietly, never trying to force the game, using his judgment.

It was toward dawn that there came a sudden loud knocking at the door of the flat.

"Damn it! The police!" said Mr. Stallworthy-Miller.

On the instant, Mrs. Stallworthy-Miller was at the prince's side. On her heels, came the general. With a campaigner's instinct, he perceived that the prince would be given a chance of escape, and he resolved to share it.

"Come along!" said Mrs. Stallworthy-Miller sharply, and she opened a door at the left of the buffet.

They slipped through it quickly, the

general on their heels, and found themselves in her bedroom. She locked the door. Some one had brought their hats earlier in the evening, and set them on her toilet table. The general, old campaigner, had his in his hand. Mrs. Stallworthy-Miller opened the door of a large wardrobe at the back of the room, parted the dresses that filled it, drew a bolt at the back, and opened a door outward.

"Come on!" she ordered.

They followed her through the short avenue of scented gowns and found themselves in another bedroom. An awakened lady blinked at them with sleepy eyes from the bed.

"Sorry to disturb you, Ermyntude. It's those beastly police!" explained Mrs. Stallworthy-Miller.

"All right, dear," said the blinking lady.

Mrs. Stallworthy-Miller led them out into the hall of the flat.

"I pay half her rent for the convenience, and it's well worth it," she informed them.

"I should think it was," said the general, with real feeling.

She opened the door of the flat.

"It's quite all right," she assured them. "You're in the next block of flats. If any one tries to interfere with you, say that you've been at Mrs. D'Albert-Wilkinson's flat. You have. Good night, gentlemen."

When they came out of the front door, they saw four taxicabs at the door of the next block, that in which the Stallworthy-Millers lived. Two police constables standing near looked at them with cold suspicion.

"Hallo! What's up, officer?" asked the general, with well-feigned surprise.

"Raid on a gambling club!" said the policeman gloomily.

"Monstrous!" exclaimed the prince. "They'll be starting them in Park Lane next!"

They went briskly down the street.

CHAPTER V.

At the end of the street, they came to a cab rank. The Earl of Bastable called a cab.

"I'm going for a stroll in the park to clear my head," said the prince.

He crossed the road briskly and went up the street opposite. He soon reached the park, and went straight to the bank of the Serpentine. Save for an early-bathing enthusiast, diving furiously from a plank, he seemed to have it to himself, and enjoyed it none the less for that. Then, coming round the corner of a shrubbery, he found a young man with his hands in his pockets, gazing into the water with an air of moody despair.

In the ten paces between them, the prince's quick eyes took in the young man's lean and hungry look, the frayed shabbiness of his clothes, the cracks across the tops of his boots, the three days' beard on his chin, his air of drooping lassitude. The prince felt strongly that he was out of keeping with the fresh morning.

He stopped and began:

"If you will pardon my suggestion, it would be a mere waste of time to try to drown yourself here. The water is too shallow."

The young man turned, flushed faintly, scowled, and said:

"Devilishly funny, aren't you?"

"It has always been my vice," the prince admitted gravely.

"Go away and cure yourself!" snapped the young man.

The prince laughed; this spirit in adversity pleased him.

"I wouldn't have intruded on your apparently mournful reflections if I hadn't had another suggestion to make," he went on amiably.

The young man looked at him over his shoulder, and the prince's smile seemed to disarm him somewhat; his scowl grew less fierce.

"I was going to beg you to give me the pleasure of your company at breakfast," said the prince.

There was a slight, convulsive movement of the young man's lips; he hesitated for a few seconds; then he said:

"Thank you. I shall be delighted to accept."

"Good," said the prince. He looked up and down the park, measuring the distance, and added: "We're nearer Bayswater than Hyde Park Corner. We'll get a cab there."

They went on slowly for about fifty yards; then the prince began:

"By the way, Mr.——"

"Thelsmere—John Thelsmere."

"My name is Stuart—John Stuart—the same unlucky Christian name. I've read in a book that tobacco is helpful to still the pangs of hunger. Do you think a cigarette or a cigar——"

"I believe a cigarette would make another man of me," said the young man eagerly. "I haven't smoked for three days."

The prince gave him a cigarette. He lighted it, inhaled deeply, and breathed out the smoke slowly.

"What a cigarette!" he exclaimed. "The last I smoked were wicked wood-bines."

By the time he had smoked half of it, he was walking almost briskly.

They came out into Bayswater and took a taxicab to Half Moon Street. The prince led his new acquaintance into the dining room, where the table was set with a simple supper.

"I'm going to give you two biscuits and no more for the moment," he said. "Then, I think, after a hot bath and a change of linen, you might safely have something more substantial in the way of food. I believe a little food to begin with is the proper treatment for real hunger. I read it in a book."

"Then it must be true—though painful," said Thelsmere, gazing wolfishly at the cold chicken.

John Thelsmere's story was not the commonest in London, but it was common enough. The son of a country doctor, he had gone to a public school and gained a scholarship at St. John's College, Oxford. On leaving Oxford, he had obtained a post as assistant master in a preparatory school. That had been bad enough, but having, at the end of two years, saved sixty pounds, he had come to London and tried to earn his living as author and journalist. With this sixty pounds and perhaps another forty earned by writing, he had struggled on for nineteen months, only to find himself at the end of them on the bank of the Serpentine at four in the morning, with empty pockets and the hunger of a winter wolf.

"So, you see, I've made a howling mess of it," he said at the end of his story.

"Why don't you go back to your schoolmastering?" asked the prince, who had listened to him with genuine interest.

Thelsmere shook his head. "No," he said firmly. "Like most people who write, I've become a confirmed gambler. The game has got into my blood, and I can leave it only by the Thames, the Serpentine, or the workhouse infirmary. Pneumonia from exposure, you know."

The prince smiled upon him with warm approval and said:

"That's the proper sporting spirit." He paused; then added: "But supposing you were beginning the game afresh, do you think you could win?"

"Starting it again with that sixty pounds in the bank, I could," said Thelsmere confidently.

The prince tapped the table gently, considering Thelsmere. Then he announced:

"Well, as an American acquaintance of mine puts it, I'll stake you."

"Stake me?" asked Thelsmere.

"He once called it 'grubstaking.'"

From his hip pocket he drew out the notes and checks he had brought away from the flat of Mr. Stallworthy-Miller. He took from them three twenty-pound notes and laid them beside Thelsmere's plate. Then he said thoughtfully:

"And you'll want a fresh outfit. Let's call it a hundred."

He put two more notes on the other three.

Thelsmere stared at the notes; put out his hand; drew it back.

"B-b-but it's a hundred p-p-pounds!" he said in a scared voice.

"Yes. Put it in your pocket," the prince ordered with his delightful smile.

"But what am I to do for it?"

"Astonish the world with immortal works," laughed the prince.

"B-b-but how can I take it?" Thelsmere's face was working curiously.

"I should take it with my hand if I were you," suggested the prince, smiling again. "Call it a loan to be repaid when Fortune smiles really broadly on you."

Thelsmere put the notes in the breast pocket of his ragged jacket with fumbling fingers. He looked dazed.

"I don't know how to thank you," he muttered.

"Then, for goodness' sake, don't try!" said the prince earnestly. "I would so much rather you ate, instead."

Thelsmere looked at him hard, and there were tears in his eyes.

"You're a damned good chap!" he said.

It was another Thelsmere, a Thelsmere who trod the pavement like a conqueror, who walked down Half Moon Street to Piccadilly soon after ten o'clock. Food, drink, tobacco, and, above all, five pieces of crinkling paper, had transformed the world.

He walked briskly to Lloyd's Bank in St. James' Street, paid four of the notes into his account—he had a balance of one shilling there—and changed

the fifth into five-pound notes and gold. As he came out into the street, a pretty girl, a very pretty girl, passing, recognized him, stopped short, smiling, and held out her hand.

"Why, Miss Stuart!" he cried, and shook her hand warmly. *

"How are you, Mr. Thelsmere?" she asked, and her dark-blue eyes shone on him kindly. "We haven't met for an age—not since we were beginning our London careers in those lodgings in the Harleyford Road." She hesitated, looking him over, and added: "I—I hope you're getting on all right."

"I wasn't, but I am. This morning my luck turned, and now things are looking first rate," he said cheerfully. "But let's go into this tea shop and compare careers over its innocuous coffee. I see from your pretty clothes that you're succeeding."

She turned into the shop. "I was," she said. "But I've just lost my job in 'The Skating Girl'—the usual brute of a manager."

"I'm sorry to hear that!" he exclaimed, with quick sympathy.

"Oh, it's all right. I've saved money enough to carry me on for months. Besides, I've got friends now."

"I'm very glad to hear it," he said heartily.

They went into the smoking room and sat down at a table. He ordered coffee; she took a cigarette case from her vanity bag and lighted a cigarette. They related their adventures since their last meeting—her tale of success, his of failure.

At the end of it, he said:

"It's a curious thing, but the man who is financing my fresh start is of the same name as yourself—John Stuart."

"I have a brother John."

"My benefactor lives at 88a Half Moon Street."

"But my brother's living at 88a Half Moon Street," she said in some

surprise. "I learned only last week, from his landlady at Sudbury, that he had moved there. Did you say he was financing your fresh start?"

"Yes."

"That isn't like John." Her brow wrinkled in a perplexed frown. "What is your friend like?"

He gave an accurate description of John Stuart, and ended:

"Of course he's exactly like Charles II."

"But it is John!" she cried in yet greater perplexity. "Where did you come across him?"

"On the bank of the Serpentine at four o'clock this morning—in evening dress."

"At four o'clock in the morning—in evening dress! John couldn't possibly do such a thing!"

"And he took me home, fed me, clothed me—underneath, you know—and lent me a hundred pounds to begin the world afresh with."

"Oh, that's quite incredible! It wasn't John." She spoke with profound conviction. "But it is odd that he should have the same name, and be so like him, and live at the same address."

Again she questioned him minutely about his benefactor's appearance—his face, his eyes, his hair, his hands, his feet, his voice, and his manners. She could not for a moment believe that he had a charming smile.

In the end she said:

"It is John, or it's some one in John's skin. I'm certainly going to look into it."

"You certainly ought to," said Thelsmere. "But don't go till after lunch. He didn't get to bed till half past four, and he said that he meant to have eight hours' sleep."

"But that again isn't a bit like John!" she exclaimed. "If he went to bed at a quarter past seven in the morning, he'd get up at half past. He prides

himself on silly things like that. All the same, I won't go till after lunch. He'll be in a good temper then—if it is John. He always loved his meals!"

CHAPTER VI.

What time Thelsmere and Agatha Stuart were comparing their careers in the Piccadilly tea shop, John Stuart was studying, with his wonted earnestness, the *Daily Wire* leader, committing to memory such powerful phrases in it as appealed strongly to his vigorous intelligence.

He had come nearly to the end of his grateful task when the door opened and the Princess Anne entered briskly. Flushed and smiling, she looked the very embodiment of the fair freshness of the summer morning.

"Good morning, Richard. Good morning, Sir Horace," she began quickly. "I just ran in to tell you that you're in for a first-class wiggling, Richard. It seems that you weren't satisfied with pulling all our legs at lunch yesterday, but went off to the club and pulled the leg of Peter Augustus. Why ever did you tell him that you would try to get him the post of triangle player in a street band? You know how touchy he is, and what a fuss he always makes about your damaging his royal dignity."

"But-b-but I never——" gasped John Stuart, stopped short, and ground his teeth.

The wretched frivolity of his employer had shattered the fair intellectual edifice he was rearing ere he had finished the first story.

Fortunately the tact of Sir Horace rose to the occasion. Resolved to give his apt pupil breathing space to adjust his mind to this new idea, he said loudly and firmly:

"His highness will have his joke, you know. It's his failing, and allowances should be made for it."

The Princess Anne sat down on the edge of the table and swung a pair of very small feet thoughtfully to and fro. "That's all very well," she said gravely. "But I'm sure mother won't make any allowance for it this morning. Peter Augustus nearly cried. And the worst of it was that the more furious he got, the more like a triangle player he looked. I had to slip away or I should have laughed. What are you going to do?"

John Stuart had not recovered sufficiently from the shock of the shattering of his edifice to make an intelligible reply. Sir Horace came to his aid.

"It's a great pity that Prince Peter Augustus lets his touchiness grow on him," he said in a tone of fine impartiality. "It was only a joke, and, after all, what is a joke?"

John Stuart took the cue. He said in his harshest voice:

"A man without a sense of humor is deficient."

He was scowling fiercely.

"But Peter Augustus hasn't one," said the Princess Anne in a tone of certainty. "I'm afraid mother will insist on your apologizing."

"I won't apologize," John Stuart announced dourly.

"I was afraid you wouldn't." She sighed; then added: "And, after all, I don't see why you should. Peter Augustus is always insufferable. I expect he brought it on himself. But I must be going. I don't want mother to find me here. She'd know I'd been warning you."

With that, she slipped off the table, bade them good-by, and went.

"Here's a pretty kettle of fish!" cried Sir Horace, as the door closed behind her.

"Just when I'd begun so well, too!" John Stuart groaned.

But the Princess Anne's suggestion that Prince Peter Augustus had probably brought the joke on himself had

shown Sir Horace a possible way out. He waddled quickly to the telephone in the hall and rang up the Earl of Bastable.

Fortunately he found that the ingenuous young peer had risen and was at breakfast. He came at once to the telephone and gave Sir Horace a full account of the infuriating of Prince Peter Augustus. Sir Horace learned the one fact he wanted—that Prince Peter Augustus had first, and for no reason, been offensive.

He hurried back to John Stuart with the news, and begged him to drop the subject of Prince Augustus' deficiency in humor and keep the fact of his being the aggressor well to the fore. John Stuart agreed to do so the more readily that he had the poorest opinion of the sense of humor and of jokes. When, then, the prince's stern aunt came into the room with slow and very severe dignity, he was quite ready to hold his own, or, rather, the prince's own, and a little more.

The prince was at a disadvantage in these painful interviews with his aunt; he had been used since his ninth year to being scolded and punished by her, and for the most part the scoldings and punishments had been well deserved. John Stuart was hampered by no such memories. Moreover, he was greatly strengthened by his stern Northern conviction, not of the inferiority of woman, but of the superiority of man. The sex of the prince's aunt was well to the fore in his mind.

He listened to her with patient, but stern indulgence. He had learned in his youth and in the bosom of his uncompromising family that it is best that a woman should be given her full say without interruption.

But when he did begin, he began with the manner of one who would not himself brook interruption, and he did not brook it. His theme was the offensiveness of Prince Peter Augustus.

He was not eloquent on it—he could hardly be eloquent on a subject that the leader writer of the *Daily Wire* had not treated—but he was verbose and frequently violent.

Sir Horace gasped, and his eyes bulged from a purple face. John Stuart, with unabated vigor, went on to discuss the matter of Prince Peter Augustus' lack of a sense of humor. He said that that lack made him a disgrace to the family. In the end, it became quite clear that the really burning question was not whether he should apologize to Prince Peter Augustus, but whether Prince Peter Augustus should apologize to him. That was what the prince's stern aunt understood when she went away, hurriedly and rather dazed.

Sir Horace was still purple and gasping when the door of John Stuart's sitting room closed behind her. After a pause, he said in a broken voice:

"Well—I never in all my life—heard—such infernal cheek!"

John Stuart gazed at him in mild wonder.

"Why, what did I say?" he asked.

"Say?" howled Sir Horace, with a sudden grateful fullness of breath. "Do you realize whom you have been speaking to? It's monstrous! Perfectly monstrous! If ever it comes out that you're not the prince, England—England will be too hot to hold me!"

John Stuart frowned upon him.

"Whoever she may be," he said, "a woman is a woman, and it's a man's duty to set her right."

With a thoughtful scowl, he returned to what was, for the time being, the main interest of his life, and began to rearrange that morning's leader in the *Daily Wire* and to bridge over the slight gulf between it and the leader of the day before in such a fashion that the ideas they contained should flow smoothly and consistently from his tongue on the first occasion that offered.

It offered sooner than he expected. A footman came from the prince's aunt to invite them to lunch with her. Sir Horace could not believe his ears. He stared at the footman and he stared at John Stuart.

John Stuart accepted the invitation, a well-merited tribute, with calm dignity.

CHAPTER VII.

At half past twelve, the prince arose, refreshed, and made a leisurely toilet. He learned from Bletsoe that John Stuart seemed at ease and even happy in his new home at the palace, and at once said that he should stay there.

Bletsoe found the derangement of his life incident to his attendance on John Stuart unpleasant, for that worthy young fellow had not yet endeared himself to the valet. He was roused from gloomy reflections by a firm ringing of the front-door bell and an even more decided knocking on the door. Visitors seldom knock so firmly at the doors of princes, and he opened it in some curiosity. A very pretty dark-haired, blue-eyed girl stood on the threshold. He felt that he knew her face, but, to his annoyance, he found that he could not remember where he had seen it before, and her name had escaped his memory. He prided himself on his remembrance of names and faces.

"Is Mr. Stuart—Mr. John Stuart—at home?" she asked.

For a moment Bletsoe hesitated. He enjoyed complete discretion in the matter of visitors to the prince, and dismissed most of them on the instant. But this was such a pretty visitor that it seemed wiser to exercise that discretion by admitting her and learning the prince's desire in the matter.

Accordingly he said quite truthfully:

"I believe not. But if you will come in, I will ascertain."

He opened the door wide, she entered with a self-possessed air, and he ushered her into the small drawing-room on the opposite side of the hall from the dining room.

"Tell him that his sister has come to see him, if he's in. If he isn't in, I'll wait," she said.

Bletsoe was enlightened and relieved. His memory had not played him false; it was merely a family likeness that had made him feel he had seen her face before.

"Very good, madam," he said, and left her.

Agatha stared around the drawing-room in almost as great an astonishment as that with which she had heard Thelsmere's story. Its quiet scheme of decoration was not only wholly unlike the floridness of the drawing-rooms she knew, but also it was quite irreconcilable with the temperament, the intelligence, and the taste of her brother. Then the solution came to her—plainly he had taken the house furnished. She sat down with a sigh of relief.

Bletsoe went upstairs to the smoking room and informed the prince that Miss Stuart had called to see her brother.

"Then I *shall* know every one in the world!" cried the prince in a tone of lively satisfaction.

"Shall I show her up, your highness, or will you go down to the drawing-room?"

"What do you think I'd better do?"

"I might telephone to Mr. Stuart to come and entertain her," Bletsoe suggested.

"But he wouldn't entertain her; he'd bully her," said the prince. Then, with an air of inspiration, he added: "I think I had better be her brother for an afternoon. It will be a pleasant change for her."

Bletsoe did not seem pleased.

"Besides, it will be such an excellent test of the likeness. If I can pass as

John Stuart with his sister, he can pass as me with any one in the world," the prince continued. "Except with, perhaps, two ladies of my acquaintance," he added thoughtfully. "So you had better bring her up to me."

"Yes, your highness," said Bletsoe gloomily, and he opened the door.

"Oh—by the way, when Lord Bastable comes, explain to him that Miss Stuart has mistaken me for her brother and tell him on no account to shatter her pleasant illusion."

"Yes, your highness," Bletsoe repeated.

He went back to the drawing-room and, somewhat morosely inviting Agatha to come upstairs, led the way and ushered her into the smoking room.

"How do you do, John?" she began in the tone of one prepared to defend herself.

"Oh, Agatha, how are you?" said the prince in as harsh a tone as he could assume, and by an effort he restrained the charming smile that the sight of beauty always drew from him, remembering in time that John Stuart rarely smiled, and that beauty was about the last thing in the world to draw a smile from him. Then he paused, at a loss; he did not know whether John Stuart was in the habit of kissing his sister or not.

It seemed to him that he was not, for she put a cool, soft hand into his and said quietly:

"It's a long time since I last saw you."

The prince did not know whether to be disappointed or relieved by her restraint. On the one hand, he had no desire to kiss the sister of an employee under false pretenses; on the other, the lips of Miss Agatha Stuart were manifestly formed for kisses. He kept his brow furrowed by a frown in John Stuart's best manner.

Agatha sat down in an easy-chair

and gazed at him earnestly. Then she looked around the room and said:

"You are doing yourself well. Fancy your having grown rich!"

There was a little envy in her tone.

"Not so very rich," said the prince quickly.

"I never believed you had it in you, though you never did think or talk of anything but making money," she went on, without paying any heed to his statement.

The prince had never before enjoyed a personal experience of sisterliness, and the present exhibition of it did not please him. He frowned more deeply than ever as he said, again in the best John Stuart manner:

"A prophet is always without honor in his own country."

"How did you make your money?" she asked quietly. "Not in that insurance business, anyhow. I'm sure of that."

"No. I didn't make it in the insurance business," said the prince quite truthfully.

"Oh, if you don't want to tell me!" She shrugged her shoulders.

"It would take so long to explain," said the prince. "But wouldn't you like some coffee and a liqueur? It's too early for tea."

She looked at him with a startled air, hesitating.

"Thanks, I should," she accepted finally. "I didn't have any coffee after lunch."

He rang the bell, and when Bletsoe came, bade him bring coffee and Grand Marnier. When the valet had shut the door, she said:

"What a good-looking butler you've got!"

"Isn't he? You might almost find his face on a coin of one of the Greek cities in Sicily," the prince agreed, almost with enthusiasm. Then, at her look of surprise, he added with cold

severity: "But, after all, beauty's only skin deep."

"I don't know anything about coins and Greek cities, but I certainly think he's one of the best-looking men I ever saw."

"Beauty's only skin deep," the prince repeated, even more severely.

"I know that." She spoke a trifle impatiently. "Is he a good servant?"

"The best in London—invaluable," said the prince warmly.

"I tell you what," she announced with an air of decision. "I don't see why I should go on spending money on lodgings when you've got this large house all to yourself. You could easily spare me a room."

Without pausing to consider the matter, the prince began, "I shall be charm—" stopped short just in time, and went on in a harsher voice, "All right. I'll let you have two rooms—a bedroom and a sitting room. And you can have a latchkey, and come and go just as you like. They're on the ground floor, though—the rooms."

"That's—that's awfully decent of you!"

"Not at all—not at all," said the prince quickly. "Er—er—blood is thicker than water."

"All the same, it is awfully decent of you," she insisted gratefully. "And I'll pay for my board—twelve shillings a week."

"You won't!" declared the prince with some heat.

She smiled, a delightful smile, the first she had smiled since she came.

"Very well, I won't," she agreed.

"Thank you very much."

There was a pause. The prince had leisure to perceive what he had done, and his mind misgave him somewhat. He had given her John Stuart's rooms, and John Stuart could not stay at the palace all the time.

A far more important matter was that of the proprieties. Miss Stuart

could not very well become the guest of an unmarried man. But it was too late to withdraw his offer; indeed, he could not withdraw it without revealing his secret. He foresaw trouble when she did learn it, grave trouble. But it could not be helped now; he could only follow his usual custom and leave the matter on the knees of the gods. The frown cleared from his brow.

When, some time later, there came a ring at the bell, a knocking at the front door, and the sound of voices in the hall, the prince guessed that Bletsoe was informing the Earl of Bastable of Miss Stuart's error. He wondered whether he was about to be amused, merely, or to get into trouble.

The door opened, and Bletsoe ushered in the Earl of Bastable. He was wearing an air of bewilderment, and stammered as he greeted Agatha.

She received him with no warmth, but with considerable surprise.

"Fancy you two knowing one another!" she said.

"I was never so surprised in my life as to learn that you were here," said the Earl of Bastable, and he looked it.

"It's not a bit more odd than that you two should know one another," the prince put in firmly. Then he added, in the harsh, didactic accents of John Stuart: "It's a small world."

"All the same, it's odd that it should be as small as all that," said Agatha with reason.

"You're right," agreed the Earl of Bastable.

There was a pause. Then the earl changed the subject by asking how things were going at the theater; and Agatha entered upon a recital of her quarrel with the manager which had led to the loss of her part in "The Skating Girl."

Then, to the relief of the prince, when the clock struck four, she rose hastily, and said that she must be going, as she had many things to do. The

Earl of Bastable did not offer to go with her to help her, but he invited her to dine with him at the Ritz on the following night. She accepted the invitation, and the prince accompanied her to the front door and put her into a cab. She paused, with her foot on the step, and said:

"There's no doubt that growing rich has improved you immensely."

"Thank you," said the prince.

"This is a rum go!" growled the Earl of Bastable, as the prince came back into the smoking room.

"Yes?" said the prince in a tone of amiable inquiry.

"Of course it is. And how did it come about? Who is this John Stuart? How on earth did his sister come to mistake you for him? Hasn't she ever seen him, or hasn't she seen him for years? She never told me she had a brother. I never heard of him till you mentioned him last night. Where is he?" His sentences almost tumbled over one another in his eager curiosity.

The prince explained.

"Of all the mad games— But there! They're the only kind that ever really amuse you," said the Earl of Bastable, when the prince had concluded. "But my hat! There'll be the deuce to pay when it comes out!"

"Oh, it won't come out. Why should it?"

"Well, you don't have the best of luck, you know." The earl spoke despondently. "And then such a lot of people know it—Sir Horace, Bletsoe, myself, and this John Stuart. A secret's no secret when three people know it, and that's four—five with yourself."

"Bromide, oh, bromide!" said the prince cheerfully. "If it isn't a secret, it will be a conspiracy of silence. Who is going to gain anything by telling? Sir Horace is the only dangerous person, and he'll get into worse trouble than I shall, if it comes out. I've told him he will."

"There's some one you've forgotten—Miss Stuart."

"Oh, she won't find out. She was never on good enough terms with her brother to be much interested in him. Why, she never had the slightest suspicion this afternoon; and as long as I don't smile, she won't have." He paused as it flashed across him that this was the moment to let the earl know of the arrangements she had made; then he added: "It will be a bit awkward, though, having her always on the spot—living here."

"Living here? What do you mean?" cried the Earl of Bastable loudly.

"She has arranged to take up her abode here. She didn't think that her bachelor brother should live in a large house and she pay for lodgings. And I'm bound to admit there's a good deal to be said for her point of view," said the prince in a dispassionate tone.

"But it would never do! Never!"

The prince shrugged his shoulders with an air of helplessness.

"How could I say no?"

"Think what people would say! She wouldn't have a scrap of character left, if it came out that she'd been living in your house—not a scrap!"

"Goodness knows I don't want her in the house. But what am I to do? I can't have this splendid idea wrecked on a simple social rock like that."

"You must stop her!"

"Stop her? You know her—does she look a likely person to stop?"

The Earl of Bastable was silent. His frown was very near a scowl. The prince's belief in the firmness of Miss Agatha Stuart was so well founded.

CHAPTER VIII.

While the prince and the Earl of Bastable had been discussing the question of Agatha Stuart's coming to stay at Half Moon Street, a taxi had carried her to her lodgings in Bickmore

Street, and already she had begun to pack. Her belongings, chiefly garments, were easily contained in two trunks of moderate size. But she did not pack them quickly, for she folded each frock carefully, so that it should be as little as possible crushed. She did not, therefore, reach the house in Half Moon Street till a quarter past five.

She found herself attaching undue importance to the fact that Henry Cleveland, the footman, and not James Bletsoe, received her and carried her trunks to her bedroom, from which every trace of her brother's occupation had already been removed.

When he had set the trunks on the floor, he blushed and said:

"I will bring the tea to the drawing-room, miss. Mr. Bletsoe says that you might as well use it, since Mr. Stuart never does. Shall I bring it at once?"

"In about five minutes, thank you," she said.

When he had shut the door, she turned eagerly to an examination of the room and surveyed it with a long-drawn sigh of pleasure. After the commonplace ugliness, sometimes sordidness, of theatrical lodgings—she had not yet risen to the possession of a flat of her own—it seemed to her the last word in prettiness; though she was a trifle troubled by the carelessness with which the shepherdesses in the pictures empaneled in the walls had fastened their draperies.

Then she went to the drawing-room to tea.

She was a little disappointed that Henry Cleveland brought in the tray; she would have preferred that James Bletsoe should have brought it. The delicacy of the cakes and the beauty of the old Sèvres service did not quite make up for his not doing so.

James Bletsoe timed his entry to the moment. She had taken out her cigarette case when he entered the drawing-

room, bringing with him a box of the prince's cigarettes.

He opened it, handed it to her, and said:

"I think you will prefer one of these, madam."

She took one and thanked him, looking rather earnestly at his expressionless, impassive face. She felt that the prince had probably been right when he had said that it was a face that might have adorned a Greek coin. The gray eyes seemed to look through her without seeing her. This interested, but did not please, her. The eyes of most men looked at her—hard. She gave herself a little, irritated shake. What on earth did it matter? A butler!

He turned, went to the door, opened it, and was going through it, when she called sharply:

"Mr. Bletsoe."

He turned and again, looked through her, waiting.

"I suppose this house doesn't belong to my brother? He's taken it furnished?" she asked.

"No, madam. Neither the house nor the furniture belong to him."

"I thought not. He could never have furnished it like this," she said in a tone of relief. "How long has he taken it for?"

"I don't know, madam." He spoke with utter indifference.

She felt that it was quite the right tone in which to speak of John. But it did not please her. After all, whatever John might be himself, he had her for a sister.

She frowned at Bletsoe, but as he was still looking calmly through her, she could not think that he saw it.

Then he said:

"Perhaps it would interest you to go over the house, madam? There are many beautiful things in it."

Had his voice expressed the faintest desire to show them to her, she would

have refused coldly. As it was, she said:

"Yes. I should like to see it."

He took her from room to room, showing her the few pictures, the few pieces of jade and lacquer, the few old Chinese ivories, all of them admirable. But he showed them to her with so warm an enthusiasm, almost a passion, for their beauty, that for the while he lent her untrained eye sight, her neglected spirit understanding. His face was no longer impassive, or his voice toneless, or his eyes cold. No longer did they look through her. They looked into her eyes and saw them.

Once he ran his fingers lovingly down a line of a translucent jade figure of Kwanyin, and she observed that he had beautiful hands.

"What a lot you know!" she exclaimed almost enviously, as they came back to the drawing-room.

"I like these things," he said quietly. "And I have always made a point of being in the house of people with taste. They are the nicest to live with."

"I see," she said thoughtfully, and then, on a note of wonder: "But John? John doesn't understand these things. He—he wouldn't care for them."

He hesitated, gazing at her, then he said:

"Very likely not, madam. But I go with the house."

She looked at him oddly.

"Yes," she said softly, "you do go with the house."

He left her, and for a little while her mind was full of the beautiful things she had seen. Then Bletsoe's face alone filled it.

CHAPTER IX.

The Princess Anne was sitting with her mother in the blue boudoir, a room very richly furnished in the luxuriant vogue of the end of the reign of the good Prince Albert.

They had been silent for perhaps three minutes, during which the Princess Anne had gazed with distaste at the fierce, but anatomically incorrect parrots embroidered in green, red, and blue beadwork on the betasseled fire screen clamped to the variegated brown marble mantelpiece.

Then her mother said in a musing tone:

"The extraordinary thing about it is the suddenness of the improvement in Richard. A month ago, he was consistently frivolous; he took nothing seriously. More than once I was told that he sometimes made jokes about sacred things—the—er—er—bishops in the House of Lords."

"Perhaps he has fallen in love with some one," suggested the Princess Anne.

"I'm afraid those novels you read fill your head with a lot of foolish nonsense," said her mother sadly. "But it isn't that. When he is in love, it only makes him more frivolous and neglectful of the duties of his station."

"How do you know that?" the Princess Anne asked quickly, and a look of bright interest illumined her face.

"Oh, he's been in love several times," said her mother thoughtlessly.

"Who has he been in love with? I never heard anything about it!" cried the Princess Anne, with such an access of interest that she forgot her grammar.

"You wouldn't. As soon as my attention was drawn to the fact that he was paying attentions to a lady, I took measures to secure the lady's absence from our circle for a considerable time," said her mother with stern satisfaction.

"But how frightfully hard on Richard! And on them, too! They couldn't help falling in love with him, I expect. He is really rather fascinating in his queer way—at least he used to be before he improved," she added.

Her mother gazed at her with a sudden complete loss of her air of satisfaction. Indeed, she looked surprised and uneasy.

"Has—has Richard ever paid any attentions to you?" she asked sternly.

"Gracious, no!" cried the Princess Anne. "So far, I don't believe it's ever entered his head!"

If there was a faint note of regret in her voice at the prince's obtuseness, or a faint note of hope that it might not last, her mother's ears did not catch it. She breathed a deep sigh of relief.

"I'm very glad to hear it," she said.

The Princess Anne did not look at all glad.

"I don't think he'll fall in love with the Princess Frieda," she said thoughtfully. "Her face is scarred."

"How often must I tell you that beauty is only skin deep?" said her mother. "What's a scarred face?"

"Richard is so frightfully particular. I've noticed it more than once."

A footman opened the door and announced Prince Richard. John Stuart entered.

"I was just telling Anne for the hundredth time that beauty is only skin deep," said the stern aunt of the prince impatiently.

"I'm always saying it," cried John Stuart in swift, almost enthusiastic agreement.

"As if the scar on Princess Frieda's face would make any difference to a man of real intelligence!" The stern aunt of the prince spoke scornfully.

John Stuart hesitated. He knew that a marriage between the prince and Princess Frieda of Scandinavia was in process of being arranged, that she was even now on her way to England; but he knew very little else about it. He must move warily.

"It would make no difference to me," he said cautiously.

"I knew it wouldn't! I told Anne it

wouldn't!" cried the stern aunt of the prince triumphantly.

John Stuart gazed at her with a wooden face for ten seconds. Then he began:

"The government have made the very faux pas we——"

"I must get ready to go to the station," interrupted the Princess Anne, and she rose quickly and made for the door. As she passed John Stuart, she murmured: "You are a humbug!"

The door closed behind her. John Stuart turned and gazed at it with a faintly bewildered air. Then he turned back to the stern aunt of the prince, cleared his throat, and continued:

"As I was saying, the government
——"

The coming of the Princess Frieda was not a matter for newspaper headlines, only for paragraphs in the court intelligence; Prince Richard's marriage was not an affair of European importance.

The royal party who went to meet the princess arrived at the station to the minute. The train did not. As they waited, the Princess Anne was annoyed by the demeanor of Prince Richard. He was as stolid as a foursquare block of teak. It was like him to be uninterested by the fact that he was about to meet the lady whose heart had been decided by the diplomats of England and Scandinavia to be his, but it was not like him to be so dully uninterested in it. She had expected him to wear the air of very weary boredom with which he awaited the conclusion of any royal function he was attending. Her uncle had once said:

"It was really rather a relief to have Richard present. He's the only man I ever came across who can look as bored as I feel."

A quarter of an hour later, the Harwich express arrived, and she turned her attention with eager relief to the

Princess Frieda. She was at once surprised by the calm of the Scandinavian royal party. She had met at different stations half a dozen princesses during the last two years. Every one of them had arrived bashful and flurried about nothing at all, amid flustered and fussy attendants. But the Princess Frieda descended lightly from the carriage and stood looking calmly round her with beautiful, candid, greenish-brown eyes, as entirely composed as one whose foot is on her native heath.

The Princess Anne looked anxiously at her scarred cheek, to receive something of a shock, a pleasant shock. The Princess Frieda was wearing a veil, and the cheek was powdered. But whereas the dimple near the corner of her mouth was plain enough to the eye, the scar was little more than a shadow on the cheek, hardly a blemish at all.

Since the Scandinavians were not flurried, the presentations proceeded smoothly and quickly. When she was presented to the Princess Anne, the Princess Frieda looked for a moment at her pretty, kind, English face, and then, with a natural, childlike impulsiveness, kissed her.

Then it was the turn of Prince Richard to be presented, and the Princess Anne turned to him eagerly to observe what impression this charming creature had made on him. She was vexed to perceive that he was still stolidity itself.

Then he appeared to awake from a dream—he had, indeed, been buried in serious reflections on the latest political crisis—and his face was distorted by a corpse-like grin. He shook hands with the Princess Frieda and said:

"How do you do? Very pleased to meet you."

Sir Horace Cheatle blushed in hot, guilty discomfort. His apt pupil had failed him. But the Princess Anne was smitten by a pang of genuine horror. The grin, the handshake, the words, the intonation, and the slope of John Stu-

art's shoulders, all seemed to her so hopelessly wrong that she began to wonder whether he might not be going mad.

Only the flicker of her eyelids marked the Princess Frieda's appreciation of the fact that John Stuart had broken down. She murmured that it was charming of him to say so. Then she looked him over in one swift glance of intense curiosity and interest, forming an abiding impression of him, and lowered her eyes. Much of the child-like expectancy that helped to make them such charming eyes had faded from them.

CHAPTER X.

With the proper feminine adaptability, Agatha Stuart had settled comfortably down at the house in Half Moon Street and found her life there uncommonly pleasant.

She was wholly her own mistress, free to come and go as she liked. Her meals were served in her own sitting room. Her brother was never present at one of them. Indeed, she did not even see him for days together.

She did not lunch or dine with the Earl of Bastable or other admirers as often as she had been used. She preferred to take her meals at home, and she was surprised at the preference. She did not dream of admitting to herself that the fact that James Bletsoe frequently waited on her was the reason for it.

But that was the fact of the matter. He had awakened her interest and her womanly curiosity. His fine face, set in its expressionless, imperturbable mask, intrigued her; she desired with a growing keenness to know what lay behind that mask; she was beginning to desire to see that set imperturbability break into the liveliest and, if possible, most anxious interest in her. There

was, however, to all seeming, no likelihood of her ever obtaining her desire.

It was a further vexation that, though he always addressed her as "madam," she could not bring herself to call him "Bletsoe." She *had* to call him "*Mr. Bletsoe.*"

One morning she learned at breakfast that Henry Cleveland was about to enjoy a day's holiday. She pondered the fact for about twenty minutes before she decided not to lunch at Prince's with the Earl of Bastable, as had been arranged, but to stay at home. She came to lunch in a somewhat pleasant expectancy, to find, as she had hoped, that Bletsoe was waiting on her.

She took her soup in silence, but when he had set the red mullet before her, she asked, in a carefully indifferent tone:

"Are you always going to be a butler, Mr. Bletsoe?"

"No, madam," replied Bletsoe, in a tone of civil indifference to her faint interest in him, and he gazed thoughtfully through her at the wall behind her.

"What are you going to do?" she persisted.

"I propose to become an art dealer, madam," said Bletsoe, without removing his eyes from the wall behind her.

She restrained herself from looking around to see what he was gazing at so earnestly.

"And keep a shop?" she asked.

For a moment he looked at her with an air of patient indulgence that was somewhat irritating. Then he said:

"No, madam. I shall never keep a shop."

"But how will you get customers?"

"I have already found a good many patrons who rely on my taste and buy on my recommendation, madam. Some day I may rise to having an art gallery, as they call it, of my own."

"Then are you really an art dealer already?"

"A private art dealer—yes, madam."

"Then is that why you don't wear livery? Or is it that Mr. Stuart does not care to go to the expense of buying liveries?"

"I go with the house, madam. And in this house no one wears livery."

She paused; then she said in a faintly complaining tone:

"It makes it difficult to bear in mind always that you're a butler."

"That's unfortunate, madam. But I fear it cannot be helped. My employer would not hear of my wearing livery."

"It's a menial position. It's not a position for a man," she said with some severity.

"It depends on the man, madam," he returned suavely.

"Being at every one's beck and call!" she went on somewhat contemptuously.

"Everybody who isn't rich has to be at somebody's beck and call, madam. That's what I am paid for. I think that I have always maintained my independence, really. Indeed, I have gone so far as to thrash one of my employers who did not respect it."

"You did?" she asked quickly, and if he had been looking at her and not through her, he would have seen that her eyes were admiring. Then she added: "Still, I'm sure it isn't the proper position for a man."

"It is really a very good position for a man with the brains to make use of it, madam. The only other position open to me, when I chose my career, was that of assistant master at a preparatory school. There I should have had an immense amount of work I dislike among people I dislike more than the work, and food I dislike, and in the country I dislike, and about the same pay. I preferred to be a butler."

She studied him with a doubtful, dissatisfied air. Suddenly he looked at her and smiled.

"You see, madam," he said, "any of my friends who dislike butlers can regard me as an art dealer."

There can be no reason why a rising young musical comedian should blush when an art dealer smiles at her. But that was what Agatha did, and disliked herself for doing it.

CHAPTER XI.

On the morning after the arrival of the Princess Frieda, the prince sat in his smoking room reading the "Poems and Songs" of Richard Middleton.

He showed no pleasure when Henry Cleveland announced Sir Horace Cheattle. He laid aside the book with a frown, and bade the footman show him in in a tone of some impatience. But when Sir Horace waddled fussily into the room, he greeted him with sufficient amiability.

"I hear that oaf made a bloomer yesterday?" he began gloomily. He still resented John Stuart's close, unintelligent, convenient resemblance to himself.

"I'm afraid he did—in a moment of absent-mindedness," Sir Horace admitted in a tone of discomfort.

"Now what has that fathead got to be absent-minded about?"

"The political situation. He's very much absorbed in it," Sir Horace explained almost complacently.

"What on earth has it got to do with him? He's not paid four hundred a year for being a member of Parliament."

"He is—er—er—so public-spirited."

The prince appeared to be ruminating gloomily. Presently Sir Horace said:

"I've come for instructions, highness."

"Oh, let the oaf go ahead," said the prince carelessly.

"Yes, highness. But the love speeches, highness? You said you'd

write some out for him to learn by heart."

"Oh, you do that."

"Me?" Sir Horace asked blankly.

"Yes. With your experience of women, it will be much easier for you than for me."

"My experience of women?" cried Sir Horace.

"Yes. It must be immense. I've noticed that you turn every woman you come near, including my aunt, round your little finger."

Sir Horace could hardly believe his ears. He blushed deeply.

"B-b-but I haven't— Only Lady Cheatle—and—a g-g-girl at B-B-Bex-hill-on-Sea—b-b-before I married," he stammered.

"Then it must be an intuitional genius," said the prince calmly. "I leave the matter in your hands with perfect confidence."

Sir Horace's brain whirled; this was, indeed, an extraordinary, choice compliment. The prince's confidence in him was reassuring, stimulating. In seventy-five seconds, he felt that he had it in him to manage an affair of the heart with supreme skill. He protested no more.

The prince gazed gloomily out of the window. Presently he said:

"By the way, that scar on the face of Princess Frieda—I'm told that it's hardly noticeable when she wears a veil."

"It is hardly noticeable," said Sir Horace.

The prince rose and rang the bell. When Henry Cleveland came, he bade him bring the photograph of the Princess Frieda. Henry Cleveland was in charge of the prince's photographs. It had for many years been the custom of his stern aunt to give to the prince, on his birthday and on Christmas Day, a photograph of one of his relations, in an ornate silver frame. Whatever he may have thought of the faces, he

was quite sure that the frames did not accord with the scheme of decoration of any of his rooms; therefore all the photographs were stored in a red lacquer Chinese wedding chest in the dining room. It was the business of Henry Cleveland, whenever the donor of them came to the house, to set the photographs about the dining room as soon as she was safely in the drawing-room. In this way, and thanks to the prince's having once observed to her that he liked to have his relations round him at mealtimes, she had come to believe that they always stood where she saw them on her visits.

Henry Cleveland soon returned with the photograph of the Princess Frieda. The prince took it to the window and studied it carefully.

"It's rather odd," he observed to Sir Horace. "In this photograph, the scar is very distinct indeed. It seems—it seems to throw a shadow over the face."

"It must be a mistake of the photographer's, highness," said Sir Horace firmly.

The prince looked at the photograph yet more earnestly. Then he said thoughtfully:

"A very good forehead, and plenty of character in the face. What color are her eyes?"

"Green and brown, highness. Sometimes they're green, and sometimes they're brown."

"Good," approved the prince and paused, reflecting. "Well, provide that oaf with some love speeches, and let him go ahead. He may as well go on working up the proper preliminary aversion."

"But, highness, suppose her royal highness falls in love with him?" Sir Horace suggested anxiously.

"She won't. I've just looked at her photograph," said the prince with calm certainty. "And having seen her face,

you ought to know it even better than I."

Sir Horace went. The prince betook himself again to "Poems and Songs." Presently, at the end of a poem, he sighed, looked out of the window with a melancholy air, and sighed again. Then he rose, took the portrait of the Princess Frieda from the table to the window, and gazed at it earnestly.

"A nice child," he murmured in melancholy accents.

At noon that day, John Stuart, attended by Sir Horace Cheatle, went to pay his respects to the Princess Frieda. The prince's stern aunt had bidden him go, and she was no less surprised than delighted by the docility with which he obeyed.

John Stuart went with an easy mind, assured of his intellectual superiority to any woman and relying on the tact of Sir Horace to help him deal with the social side of the affair.

They found the princess in her drawing-room, seated at the window, looking out into the garden with a somewhat disconsolate air. She greeted John Stuart with the royal polite smile, which she had acquired with very little practice, since she was of a smiling spirit; and he replied to it with a corpse-like grin that, even on that hot morning, chilled her blood.

John Stuart, as was proper, opened the conversation. He said:

"I believe this is your first visit to England?"

"It is," said the princess.

John Stuart considered for about fifteen seconds; he did not wish to speak idly. Then he continued:

"In many ways you have doubtless lost by not seeing our great country earlier. But, on the other hand, you will gain by bringing a maturer judgment to your first view of it."

He paused, pleased with these weighty words. During the last three

weeks, by frequent practice on the stern aunt of the prince, he had acquired considerable oratorical powers.

"Ah, yes," the princess agreed vaguely.

"I'm inclined to envy you the great pleasures that lie before you," he went on, warming to the theme. "To see for the first time our national museums, the scenes of our great historic events, the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, Charing Cross, the Bank of England! Yes, really I could almost wish that I were seeing them for the first time myself."

"I wish you were," said the princess amiably, and again she smiled the royal smile. It seemed appropriate.

John Stuart felt even more pleased with himself, and his manner grew still more oratorical.

"But you must see the North. That is the true heart of England, the great industrial heart of England, that has made her what she is. Thousands on thousands of factories—counties, whole counties full of factories—pouring out cotton goods, iron goods, all kinds of machinery, to the farthest parts of the globe!"

"Ah, yes, I must see the North," murmured the princess.

John Stuart paused, considering; he wished to be quite fair. Then he added:

"But we must not blind ourselves to the fact that, though the North is the industrial heart of England, and modern English politics come from Manchester, London is its political heart—the Houses of Parliament."

"Ah, yes," the princess repeated.

"You must see them at their best. I know of nothing more exhilarating, more thrilling, than a full-dress debate. It is my favorite form of recreation. I could do with one every afternoon—every night!"

"Is it better than a good play?" asked the princess in a somewhat awed tone.

"A play?" cried John Stuart scornfully. "How can the purely fictitious interest of a trivial drama compare with the interest of seeing the destinies of nations tremble in the balance? Why, at the moment, there is the greatest political crisis since James II.!"

He was there. As the constant needle ever turns to the pole, so his constant mind ever turned to the leader of the morning's *Daily Wire*. He took a fresh breath and began to pour it out.

The Princess Frieda listened with an air of dutiful attention, her eyes fixed patiently on his face. At these great moments, that face was not at its best. As the great thoughts of the leader writer streamed from his lips, John Stuart wore the somewhat pained, strained air of a stupid schoolboy reciting for the first time the first twenty lines of the masterpiece of the poet Gray. Later, when he had come to the end of the wit and wisdom of the leader writer and was pouring forth his own sage reflections on them, he wore an expression of proud self-satisfaction, somewhat repulsive.

The Princess Frieda had full time to absorb both these expressions—since the impressive information he was conveying came ponderously in at her right ear and rushed hurriedly out through her left—and to form from them a distressing impression of her suitor's charm. Before the eloquent hour was up, she was trying her best to persuade herself out of the conviction that he must be the most tedious bore in all the royal circles of Europe and the Near East.

The hour might easily have become two, for John Stuart's memory was an inexhaustible mine of that wit and wisdom, had not Sir Horace intervened. At the end of three-quarters of an hour, he found himself unable any longer to assimilate the mass of solid information that was being poured into

him. He was ashamed of himself—he was growing dazed. Ten minutes later, by a violent effort, he roused himself from an apparently trance-like condition, and coughed sharply.

John Stuart finished a weighty, but somewhat involved sentence, and looked at him impatiently.

"Your highness' appointment," Sir Horace reminded him.

John Stuart rose, frowning, tore himself from his political preoccupation, and took his leave.

When the door closed behind her well-informed suitor, the Princess Frieda sprang to her feet, clasped her hands, and cried:

"*Sap-er-li-popette!* Does he always talk like that? It was like being in the schoolroom again—with *Fräulein Schumacher*."

Her lady in waiting, the Countess Fersen, gazed at her thoughtfully. Then she said:

"But it is incredible."

"It is," the princess agreed with conviction.

"I don't understand it at all," said the countess, frowning. "I was told—we were all told—there's no point in keeping it from you now—that the prince was an incorrigible *flâneur*."

"But how absurd!" cried the princess. "He is solid—quite solid—all through."

"Well, it's much better than being married to an incorrigible *flâneur*," protested the countess.

"Much," the princess assented without enthusiasm.

The Countess Fersen's face of a sudden grew sympathetic.

"I'm afraid you're disappointed, dear."

"He is not—not exciting," the princess murmured.

"But you don't want an exciting husband. They are so dangerous."

The princess looked at her somewhat curiously.

"But he might be a little exciting before we're married," she said.

"Well, after all, solid affection is the important thing. It lasts," the countess declared firmly.

"At any rate the solidity should," said the princess, and she turned to the window with a somewhat disconsolate air.

Her eyes were dull and her lips drooped a little at the corners.

Mindful of the prince's injunction, Sir Horace came to the house in Half Moon Street at half past seven, to make his report on the first interview between John Stuart and the Princess Frieda, and found the prince dressing for dinner. Beaming with satisfaction, he told the prince of the excellent impression John Stuart must have made on the princess by his masterly exposition of the political crisis.

"Poor young thing!" exclaimed the prince in a tone of compassion. Then he added cheerfully: "He's piling up that aversion, all right."

CHAPTER XII.

For two days Agatha Stuart had not seen James Bletsoe, though more than once she had heard the sound of his footsteps as he moved about the house. Already she could distinguish them from those of any one else.

After dinner on the second day, her restlessness was at such a height that she could not bring herself to go to the drawing-room and practice her songs as she had done the night before. She put a cloak over her pretty evening frock and walked up Piccadilly toward the region of the theaters, in the hope of diverting her mind in the stalls of one of them. No business manager who enjoyed her acquaintance ever refused her seats.

She walked along listlessly; the prospect of an evening in the stalls was not violently alluring. Then, as she

came past the entrance of the Piccadilly Hotel, James Bletsoe, in evening dress and a silk hat, came out of it.

The sight of him sent a faint thrill through her, and on the instant she was ready to give him the cool, gracious smile proper from the sister of his employer. He looked quietly through her at the large commissionaire on the curb who was opening the door of a taxicab.

Her heart sank. She took two steps past him—and changed her mind. She had to. She turned, smiling—not at all the cool, gracious smile of the sister of his employer—and said:

"You don't seem to recognize me, Mr. Bletsoe."

He raised his hat and said in a tone of polite, pleased astonishment:

"Why, it's Miss Stuart! How do you do?"

He shook hands with her, holding her hand a little longer than if he were greeting an ordinary acquaintance, and added:

"You've no business to be walking in Piccadilly alone at this hour, you know."

She was displeased and pleased. There was no faintest note of gratitude for her condescension in noticing him; he was even speaking in a tone of authority.

For a moment she hesitated; then she said:

"I'm going to a theater. Would you care to come? I can get seats, you know."

She had cast down the social barrier between them with a vengeance. Womanlike, for a breath she was sorry she had done so. Then she felt at ease again and uncommonly glad.

"I should be charmed," he said, smiling down at her, "but it wouldn't do. I'm off duty, of course—myself again, and all that—but it would never do for you to be seen at the theater with your brother's butler. You'd lose caste

shockingly. Suppose Lord Bastable were there."

This opposition hardened her in her purpose. Here was an opportunity of getting to know James Bletsoe, and she was not going to let it slip.

"I'm sure I don't care what Lord Bastable thinks," she said quickly. "Will you come?"

"Thank you, I won't," he said amiably, but firmly. "But I tell you what. Let me take you to a music hall—one of the smaller ones."

"I don't want to go to a music hall. I want to go to a theater."

She did not abandon the struggle; she allowed him to escort her to the entrance to the Shaftesbury Theater, and there made a last effort to induce him to yield. It was in vain. Again he refused and, raising his hat with an air of regret, was on the point of leaving her when she said:

"You're the most disobliging man I ever came across, and the most obstinate! I suppose I shall have to go to your wretched music hall, after all."

"But this is angelic of you!" he cried, and looked so delighted that her natural resentment at not having her own way was almost appeased.

He took her to the Middlesex, and even there sat far back in the box, so that his face might not be clearly seen.

Presently she was distressed by his laughing with genuine enjoyment at a turn that she found vulgar. She expressed her wonder that he should laugh at it.

He smiled at her and explained:

"But that's the advantage of being a man of taste and that kind of thing, don't you know? I haven't got to be careful what I laugh at."

She pondered this point of view for a little while; then she said:

"That's all very well, but I can't understand how you, who love beautiful pictures and ivories and jade, can like a vulgar thing like that."

"It was vulgar, but it was art," he said quickly. "All art is the expression of emotion, and that was an uncommonly good expression of the good, gross, Gallic gayety. Every mortal thing in it produced the exact emotional effect it was meant to produce. What artist can do more? But I suppose you couldn't call it great art because it doesn't express a great emotion. That's about it."

His explanation was above her head, but she thought none the worse of him for that. She thought that he was the cleverest man she had known, and found it flattering that he illustrated seriously his point of view from other turns, taking it for granted that she understood. It was no less flattering that he made no secret of his firm opinion that she was the most beautiful creature in London.

At the door of the house in Half Moon Street, he shook hands with her and bade her good night.

"Aren't you coming in?" she asked in some surprise.

"Yes," he said, smiling at her. "But in the house, I'm on duty, and everything is changed. Here I'm Mr. Bletsoe and you're Miss Stuart. Inside, I'm 'Bletsoe' and you're 'madam.'"

"Oh, but why?" she asked quickly.

"It's a matter of principle."

She felt that this was a point on which he must be made to yield. He did not yield. She could not overcome his invincible respectfulness.

Since he would not let her have her way, it was clear that he must be punished. On the next two days, she both lunched and dined with the Earl of Bastable, and was careful that that enamored young nobleman should call for her.

It was annoying that, while she suffered by depriving herself of James Bletsoe's interesting presence at her meals, James Bletsoe did not seem to suffer at all under the punishment she

had devised. At lunch on the third day, he waited on her with untroubled mien.

The next morning she received a letter from him written at the Royal Aeroplane Club, inviting her to dine that evening and go to a music hall, and asking her to telephone "yes" or "no" to him at the club.

Her first thought was to accept. Then, annoyed by the leap of her heart, her second thought was to punish him by refusing. This pleased her greatly till it was borne in upon her that, while she was quite sure the refusal would punish her, she had no assurance that it would punish him. It was, therefore, only sensible to accept.

On her way to her dancing lesson, she telephoned to his club that she would be charmed to come.

That night she sat for a long while on her bed, pondering deeply. There was no blinking the fact that James Bletsoe had made a deep impression on her; indeed, she did not wish to blink it. No man had ever made such an impression on her. She had to assure herself with considerable vehemence that she was not in love with him, and, even so, she was not quite convinced that she was not.

Next morning she made the great discovery. In the ordinary course of things, she would never have dreamed of borrowing money from her brother. But it was very clear to her that if she was to continue to dine with James Bletsoe, she must have a new evening frock.

She lost no time. At eleven o'clock, she went up to the smoking room and entered briskly.

The prince looked up from the thick book he was reading with an air of surprise that astonished her; it was almost a startled air. He rose to his feet, began to smile, and checked himself.

"Good morning. I came to ask you to lend me ten pounds. I'll pay you

back as soon as I get work. I do want a new evening frock so badly," she began.

The prince's hand went to his breast pocket and drew out his note case. He opened it and paused, gazing at her. Then he said:

"You can't get much of an evening frock for a tenner, can you? Hadn't we better make it twenty?"

The quickness with which his hand had gone to his pocket was strangely unfamiliar; his words were astounding.

"How extravagant you've grown!" she cried. "I can get a very good frock for a tenner. I know where to go."

"I have always understood they cost more," said the prince, looking at her with approving eyes. "And, of course, you must have a pretty one."

His sentiments, so foreign to his strenuous nature as she had known it, astonished her yet more. At a loss for words, she stared at him blankly.

"We must make it twenty," he insisted.

He took two notes from his case and offered them to her with a charming smile. The smile explained everything. He was not her brother John.

She flushed and cried:

"B-b-but you're not my brother! You're not John Stuart at all!"

"But I've been known as John Stuart for years."

"But you're not my brother."

"Indeed I am. You adopted me," said the prince.

"Me?" she cried.

"Yes. At our very first meeting, you hailed me as your brother John—not with enthusiasm, perhaps, but certainly with a sisterly air," he said firmly.

"But you ought to have told me that you weren't at once. Why did you play such a trick on me? It wasn't fair. Here I've been staying in a stranger's house—an unmarried man's—

with no other lady in it! Whatever will people say?"

The flush had deepened in her cheeks, her eyes were bright with anger.

"That's quite all right," said the prince, in a reassuring tone. "The only people who know that I'm not your brother are absolutely trustworthy."

"Of course! Mr. Bletsoe knew! It's disgraceful! And Lord Bastable knew! They ought to have told me. A thing that three people know isn't a secret at all!" she cried.

"That depends on the three people," said the prince quietly. "At any rate, in this case there will be a conspiracy of silence. Besides, your brother has actually been living here. No outsider can say that he has not been living here all the time. For all practical purposes, I am your brother."

"But what was the point of it all? Why did you let me go on making the mistake and come to stay here?" she asked, with some abatement of her violent indignation.

"Well, I happened to know from your brother and Lord Bastable that you are a young lady of considerable determination, and when you descended on me so suddenly, I was rather awkwardly placed. It wouldn't have been fair to your brother to land him in a serious quarrel with his sister, would it?"

"John wouldn't have minded a bit," she said bitterly.

"Oh, yes, he would. And, anyhow, I couldn't risk it. Besides, it was in the highest degree important—matters of state, don't you know?—that it should not be known that there were two John Stuarts, exactly alike, in the world. I am now your brother's employer, and I am employing him to represent me in a very delicate affair, making use of his resemblance to me."

"But—but who are you?" she asked, impressed.

"I'm Prince Richard."

"Oh, I see." Her tone was rather awed. "That does make a difference. Affairs of state, too." She paused; then added in a tone of wonder: "But it does seem queer that you should be employing John in a delicate affair, your highness."

"Oh, he's doing excellently—securing the very result I want," he said hastily. "And as he's not here, I'd better lend you those tenners for him."

"Oh, no, thank you, your highness." Agatha shook her head. Then she added mournfully: "Well, I have to thank your highness for your hospitality."

"But you're not going?" he cried in protest.

"I must," she said, firmly.

"I can't have it. In view of the services your brother is rendering me, I am only too pleased to make him this little extra return. Besides, I like to have you in the house. It charms me to hear you singing in the mornings. And then, of course, there's Lord Bastable. As you may have learned from the newspapers, I am marrying and settling down, and I have decided that it's time Lord Bastable married and settled down too. If you remain under my roof another week, I shall feel fully entitled to speak to him very seriously about the matter of his attentions to you."

Agatha gasped and looked earnestly at his funereally grave face.

Then she cried:

"But I don't mean to marry Lord Bastable!"

"Don't say that," protested the prince in a pained tone. "However, the main point is that you are going to stay on here as long as you would have stayed if I had really been your brother and not merely his double."

Agatha hesitated. She could see no reason, except his natural kindness, why the prince should accord this hos-

pitality to her. She wished to stay, but she would have refused regretfully had it not been for James Bletsoe. She did not wish to leave the house in which he lived.

"It's awfully good of your highness. I should love to stay on," she said gratefully.

"Good. I'm delighted to hear it," said the prince.

She came away from the interview with mingled feelings. She felt that the prince was a most charming man, but she was vexed that she had made a fool of herself by not knowing at their first interview that he was not John; and she was angry with James Bletsoe and the Earl of Bastable for allowing her to persist in her error. She had a grievance, indeed, and she was eager to take James Bletsoe to task for having deceived her.

She had not long to wait for the opportunity, for he waited on her at lunch. His fine, serene face increased her anger somewhat unreasonably; and when he set her soup before her, it burst forth.

"I think it's perfectly disgraceful the way you've let me go on making a fool of myself!" she cried, scowling, rather than frowning, at him.

"In what way, madam?" he asked, sparring for time.

He had not expected her to discover her error so soon, and had made no provision against it.

"You know perfectly well!" she stormed, yet further incensed by his pretense. "You deliberately let me go on thinking that the prince was my brother! It's perfectly disgraceful!"

He looked carefully through her and said calmly:

"In this house, I'm on duty, madam. I'm bound to carry out the wishes and instructions of his highness."

"But what about me? You have a duty to me, too—to any woman.

Think of what people will say! I'm hopelessly compromised."

"I think not, madam," he said calmly. "The friends of his highness who know that he is not your brother do not know that you are staying here—except, of course, the Earl of Bastable, and he does not appear to think that you're compromised. In fact, he knows you're not."

"And what has Lord Bastable got to do with it?" she asked, yet more angrily.

Bletsoe paused; the intensity of his gaze at a spot on the wall beyond her deepened. Then he said suavely:

"If you will pardon my suggesting it, madam, he would make you a nice little husband."

Agatha, flabbergasted, gasped. For a good twenty seconds, words failed her. Then the callousness of it, the fact that he could calmly see her married to another, filled her with a sense of panic.

"How dare you say such a thing?"

"It was only a suggestion, madam—just thrown out." His eyes, suddenly piercing, looked into hers. "It was not meant to be impertinent."

"But it was an impertinence!" she cried stormily. "You had no business to say anything of the kind! You know I wouldn't marry Lord Bastable!"

She had quite lost the air and tone of a lady addressing a butler.

"Do I, madam?"

"Yes, you do! And I'll never forgive you for suggesting it—never!"

Her eyes were so bright that there must have been tears in them. His eyes flickered over her face again, and they did not miss that brightness.

"It's rather hard on me that you should be so bitter against me for a natural, helpful suggestion, madam," he protested.

"Take away this soup. I can't touch it," she said.

With an expression of concern, he

removed her soup plate and brought her some filleted sole.

"Perhaps you will be able to eat this, madam."

"I'm not going to. I don't want any lunch."

The corners of her lips drooped; her eyes were still bright with unshed tears.

"This is very distressing," said Bletsoe unhappily. Then he added suddenly: "Hang being on duty!" He dropped to one knee, put an arm round her, and whispered: "I am so sorry! I never dreamed you'd take it so much to heart!"

She tried to draw away from him, but his arm did not give to the pressure. His face was transfigured, and his eyes, very bright, were looking into hers. She was smitten by quite another panic.

"How dare you, Mr. Bletsoe!" she cried, and tried to rise. His arm held her firmly in the chair, and she cried again: "Let me go!"

"I can't. You're the most fascinating creature in the world!" said James Bletsoe with profound conviction.

CHAPTER XIII.

Bending forward, a hand on either knee, John Stuart sat on a straight-backed chair and talked earnestly and continuously of the greatest crisis in the history of England.

The eyes of the Princess Frieda were dreamy, but her face wore the thoughtful air proper to one receiving instruction about a great historical event. But in truth the pregnant words of her future husband no longer entered her left ear and rushed hurriedly out through her right. Her ears were now wholly barred to them. She began a yawn in the most unaffected fashion, and awoke in time to smother, by a somewhat violent effort, the rest of it.

The Princess Anne entered briskly in a white tennis frock and shoes,

racket in hand, crossed the room quickly, kissed the princess, and said:

"I thought you'd be dressed for tennis already. Do hurry up, dear." She turned and added: "Good morning, Richard. Good morning, countess. Good morning, Sir Horace."

Both of the latter had risen; and with some surprise she surveyed John Stuart, who, still absorbed in his burning theme, his mind on a peak far above the region of manners, still sat on his chair, gazing at her with resentful eyes.

"I'll be as quick as I can—if Prince Richard will excuse me," said the Princess Frieda in a joyful tone. She rose and hurried out of the room.

A scowl from Sir Horace brought John Stuart's mind bumping down from its height. He rose with clumsy haste and blew his nose with the loud, proud blast of one protesting reproachfully against the ruffling of his finer sensibilities.

The Princess Anne gasped, swung around, and gazed at him with amazed, understanding eyes.

"Good gracious!" she murmured faintly.

Sir Horace swore horribly under his breath. John Stuart gazed gloomily at nothing in particular.

The Princess Anne told the countess quickly that they were going to a revue that night, and explained somewhat incoherently the nature of an English revue. As she did so, she kept turning to look at John Stuart with undiminished amazement.

The Princess Frieda entered in her tennis frock, racket in hand, her eyes shining brightly. The Princess Anne took her arm, and led her quickly out of the room.

A quarter of an hour later, the empurpled Sir Horace almost burst into the smoking room of the prince.

"He blew his nose! He blew his nose, highness!" he howled.

"Who blew what nose, my Horace?" asked the prince with amiable calm.

"That oaf! That damned idiot! That John Stuart, highness!"

"And why shouldn't he?" asked the prince, still calmly.

"You should have heard him do it, highness!" howled Sir Horace.

"Heaven forbid!" the prince ejaculated piously.

"It was like a trumpet!" howled Sir Horace.

"What kind of a trumpet?" the prince inquired with a livelier interest.

"A trombone—a bassoon—a large trumpet, highness," Sir Horace raved on. "The Princess Anne was there! She heard it! She knew at once he wasn't you, highness!"

"And that's that!" said the prince with conviction.

"But what is to be done, highness?" asked Sir Horace, mopping his purple brow.

"The Princess Anne will do everything that is to be done. You can trust her for that. I shall do nothing at all," said the prince with unruffled serenity. "But I trust I shall take the wiggling I shall get with manly fortitude."

Sir Horace looked at him with despairing eyes.

"I have let your highness down," he moaned. "I must resign. It is the only course open to me."

"You will do nothing of the kind." The prince spoke in a tone of extreme severity. "You didn't let me down at all. You couldn't foresee all the accomplishments of the oaf. How could you guess that he blew his nose like an elephant?" He paused, and then added: "At the same time, you'd better see that he doesn't do it again. Arrange for him to take lessons in the art of nose blowing from one of the nurses of Prince Albert's children."

The next morning, the Princess Anne awoke sufficiently suspicious to resolve that the only way to recover her peace

of mind was to demonstrate the absurdity of her suspicion.

Considering the matter, it grew clear to her that if the prince had a substitute at the palace, he himself must be somewhere else. The likeliest place was the house in Half Moon Street. It seemed to her that she might easily make sure that he was not there, at any rate; and it would be a satisfaction to her to do so.

As soon as she had had her breakfast, therefore, she ordered her motor car, put on a morning hat, and went to the prince's rooms in the palace.

She found John Stuart at breakfast, eating a chop with a very gloomy air. The *Daily Wire*, open at the leader page, was propped up in front of him so that he might read as he ate. He gazed at her with gloomily impatient eyes, for he resented her withdrawing his attention from the burning words of the leader writer.

She did not stay long with him. She went briskly down to her car, and bade her chauffeur drive her to the house in Half Moon Street.

She stepped out of the car listlessly and pressed the button of the electric bell. Henry Cleveland opened the door and blushed.

"Is his highness up?" asked the Princess Anne, and turned to step back into the car.

"Yes, your highness. He's at breakfast," was the amazing reply of Henry Cleveland; and he blushed again.

The listlessness fell from the Princess Anne. She swung around and crossed the threshold in one step. Henry Cleveland shut the front door, opened the dining-room door, and announced her. She entered quickly, and found the prince eating a grilled sole.

He rose and greeted her with a charming smile.

She sat down, and gazed at him with a dazed air, asking herself however she had been deceived for a moment

by John Stuart's resemblance to him. A single one of John Stuart's corpse-like grins should have opened her eyes for good and all. She saw now that no sense of humor, however sinister, could change the charming smile of the prince into one of those grins.

Then she began to grow angry.

"Do you always eat meat before fish at breakfast?" she added in an uncommonly combative tone.

"No; I never remember doing so," said the prince, looking at her with suddenly attentive eyes.

"Oh, I thought perhaps you did. At least, less than ten minutes ago, I saw you eating a chop at the palace, and now I find you eating a sole in Half Moon Street."

The prince laughed gently, and said in a tone of satisfaction:

"I always said that you'd be the first to find me out."

The Princess Anne gazed at him indignantly. She did not seem mollified by his tribute to her perspicacity.

"It's all very well to joke about it, and in ordinary circumstances I shouldn't have said anything, though you have landed us with the biggest bore in England. But as it is, you've treated Princess Frieda disgracefully," she said sternly.

The prince was on the point of protesting that he had a constitutional aversion to princesses, because they always smelled of bread and butter; but his cousin's face gave him pause. He suppressed his plaint, and announced with a melancholy air:

"I did it of set purpose. It seems certain that I shall marry her, and I thought it well to begin the affair properly—with a little aversion. All true love begins with a little aversion; the experts are unanimous about it."

The princess gazed at him earnestly with more than a shade of suspicion in her eyes.

"I don't know whether you're rotting or not——" she began.

"Would I rot about the deepest feelings of a strong man's heart?" the prince asked sadly.

"Yes," said the Princess Anne, without any hesitation. "But you've certainly succeeded in producing that aversion. At least, it isn't aversion; it's indifference. Frieda doesn't take any interest in you at all. She's made up her mind that she's been let in for marrying the stupidest oaf in Europe, and she never means to take any interest in you. She's cheerful enough when she's away from that—that idiot; but I expect when she thinks of what she's in for, she's thoroughly miserable. And it's a horrid shame, for she's really a darling."

The prince looked at her doubtfully.

"Are you sure? Princess Hildegard and that Cassell-Nassau girl would simply have jumped at that solid dog. They'd have hung on his thick lips. They couldn't stick me at all because I didn't talk like an animated log about some silly political business. This one doesn't sound like a princess at all."

"Well, she isn't like a Lippe-Schweidnitz or a Cassell-Nassau. After all, she has chiefly French and Russian blood in her."

"That's true," the prince admitted. "You make her sound rather interesting."

"She is. You'd like her immensely." The Princess Anne spoke with conviction. "And she has eyes of such a queer green."

"You make me feel that the process of creating the necessary aversion has gone far enough," said the prince, smiling. "You've so far shared my feelings about the others so fully that I have implicit trust in your judgment."

The Princess Anne frowned.

"It's all very well to talk of the aversion having gone far enough," she said in a tone of considerable uneasi-

ness, "but the question is—has it gone too far? I'm quite sure that John Stuart has not only bored her stiff, but he has wounded all her sensibilities. I don't believe he has shown that he admired her by as much as a single look."

"Well, I always took it that it would be rather uphill work overcoming that aversion," said the prince calmly. "It was just a painful necessity."

"But there's one thing—you must never let her dream that you landed her with John Stuart. It wouldn't only hurt her, but she's proud—really proud, not arrogant like a Lippe-Schweidnitz. I don't believe she'd ever forgive you. I don't, really. Of course I told her again and again that all that boring talk was your sinister humor."

"That was useful," said the prince. "Then if she does tax me with the deception, I must swear till I'm blue in the face that John Stuart was I being humorous in a sinister fashion."

"It's the only thing to do," agreed the Princess Anne. "It's a blessing that you can make any one believe most of the things you say."

The prince went to the telephone and rang up Sir Horace Cheatle.

"Look here! You must get Stuart away from the palace at once," he said, when he heard Sir Horace's anxious voice at the other end of the wire.

"Where shall I take him, then?" asked Sir Horace in a flustered tone.

"I don't know. Take him to some safe place. But for goodness' sake, get him away at once, or the fat will be in the fire and socially you'll be a ruined man! Then come round here in time to go with me to my morning visit to the Princess Frieda. You've no time to lose."

"Very well, highness—I'll do it at once," said Sir Horace quickly, in a tone of tremulous determination.

"Right!"

The prince rang off and sat down again at the table.

Sir Horace motored to the palace in a panic that softened the rich red of his round face to a quiet rose pink, and made haste to the prince's suite of rooms. He was very short and urgent with John Stuart, who was now making a summary of the leader in the *Daily Wire* and was loath indeed to be torn from that entrancing occupation.

He was disposed to take his time about his departure; but Bletsoe, sternly cold, came to the help of Sir Horace, and between them they hustled him, with a kit bag full of clothes and the *Daily Wire*, down to the car in less than seven minutes.

Sir Horace ordered his chauffeur to drive to his brother's house at Richmond, and told John Stuart that he was to stay there till the prince needed his services again. He added that he thought and hoped that the prince would not need them for some time.

John Stuart, already gloomy enough, became yet gloomier.

"It's most unfortunate that I should be taken away just at the very height of the crisis," he said heavily. "I have strong reasons for believing that my views on it were filtering through to the highest quarters and strengthening the opposition to this iniquitous business."

"I believe myself that you've done a great deal," said Sir Horace in a more sympathetic tone. "In fact, I shouldn't wonder if you'd done about as much as you could do."

At Hammersmith Broadway, Sir Horace stopped the car, bade John Stuart never to leave his brother's house for longer than an hour at a time, in case the prince should suddenly need him, and stepped out onto the pavement. Then he bethought him to assure John Stuart that he would find his brother quite as sympathetic a listener as Sir Horace himself to sagacious

views on the greatest crisis in the history of England. John Stuart's face brightened a little at the information, and he said that he was very glad to hear it. Sir Horace bade his chauffeur drive home, and himself hailed a taxicab and drove to the house in Half Moon Street.

The prince set out for the palace, wearing a melancholy air, but he was conscious of an excited expectancy that he had not felt for several months at the prospect of meeting a lady. The Princess Anne had awakened in him an uncommon interest in the Princess Frieda.

He bade Sir Horace make the talk at first, till he himself should have found his feet.

As the door of the Princess Frieda's drawing-room was opened by the footman, they heard her say in tones of firm conviction:

"Well, I think Wellington Croft is perfectly charming."

Wellington Croft was the leading young man in the revue she had attended the night before.

Then the footman announced them, and as he greeted her and the Countess Fersen, the prince saw the light of animation die out of the Princess Frieda's face, and the hand she gave him might have been made of wood.

On the instant he was on his mettle. It was plain, indeed, that, through the services of John Stuart, he had secured her aversion, and it gave him no pleasure whatever. While Sir Horace rattled on in a tactful and agreeable fashion about the weather and the revue, the prince surveyed her with melancholy eyes. Undoubtedly her photograph had done her no justice at all; indeed, he was inclined to believe it the worst photograph in the world. He felt injured, deeply injured. That photograph had deceived him wholly; it was a fraud of the worst kind.

He not only felt deeply injured; he

felt annoyed—deeply annoyed. The princess did not so much as glance at him. Truly, that stupid oaf, John Stuart, had filled her with aversion.

He coughed gently.

She turned to him and seemed to shrink into herself with a faint look of apprehension; the interminable, boring flood of instructive discourse was about to flow.

He said nothing, and she saw that he was gazing at her with melancholy eyes. She looked at him closely—with the faintest light of interest; it was the first engaging expression she had ever seen on his face.

The Countess Fersen was also looking at him with interest. It was the first engaging expression she had ever seen on his face.

Sir Horace babbled tactfully about the dog days and the prevalence of hydrophobia in his youth.

Then the prince began in mournful tones:

"Talking of the dog days, wouldn't it be cooler and pleasanter in the gardens?"

Before she knew what she was doing, the Princess Frieda was on her feet and smiling at him; it was the first intelligent suggestion she had ever heard fall from his lips.

He smiled at her, the most charming smile. Her eyes opened wide in a distinct stare; her lips parted a little. The smile was so surprising in its utter unlikeness to the corpse-like grins of John Stuart that it was a veritable shock to her.

The Countess Fersen, who had risen, was also staring at him with eyes full of bewilderment.

The prince saw what he had done and made haste to look melancholy again. He told himself that he must move slowly.

The Princess Frieda took the arm of the countess hastily. It was almost as if she sought protection.

They went down into the gardens and strolled down the big lawn abreast—the Countess Fersen, the princess arm in arm with her, the prince, Sir Horace.

Sir Horace began to set forth at length the regulations for the quarantining of dogs imported into the United Kingdom.

He paused, and the prince said bitterly:

"It's just my luck!"

There was another pause. Then the princess asked:

"What's just your luck?"

"Wellington Croft," said the prince, still bitterly.

The princess shot a quick glance at him and flushed ever so little. Then she looked straight in front of her with an expression of almost incredible demureness.

"Why should Wellington Croft be perfectly charming and I be planted with this ancestral mug?" the prince inquired, yet more bitterly.

"What is 'ancestral mug?'" asked the Princess Frieda.

"My face—my corrugated face," the prince explained.

The princess hastily turned her eyes up to it, and he looked down into them. His eyes assuredly were of a darker blue than they had been. She removed her own from them, and looked at his nose and lips and chin. His nose was certainly on the rugged side; but she liked his lips, so strangely curved. They were thinner than they had been yesterday.

"But I don't suppose the actor is wise and clever like you," she said in a soothing tone.

The prince uttered a short, sharp cry, and struck himself on the chest after the manner of an Oriental mourner. All three of the others jumped; he had done it with some violence.

"What is wisdom compared with good looks?" he wailed.

The princess was taken aback. It was not at all the kind of sentiment she had ever expected to hear from him.

The Countess Fersen, who had been shooting sharp, keenly scrutinizing glances up at his face across the princess, set her lips tight and looked straight in front of her, wearing an expression of startled enlightenment. She let the princess' arm slip out of her own, stopped at a rose tree, and smelled the roses.

"What is this rose, Sir Horace?" she asked.

Sir Horace turned and went to her. The prince and princess strolled on.

"This is a pretty trick you've been playing us!" said the countess in a low voice, but very fiercely.

Sir Horace's face set in an expression of quiet obstinacy.

"Trick? What trick, madam?"

"Who was that hideous, stupid, absurd young man you brought yesterday and the day before and many days before?" demanded the countess.

"I don't know what you're talking about, madam," denied Sir Horace, gazing at her with obtruding, but obstinate eyes.

"You lie well," said the countess in a tone of no approval. Then she added, in fiercely indignant tones: "Do you know what would happen if I were to tell her highness? She would go home at once—to-day."

"Well, I don't know what it is you could tell her. But in that case, I shouldn't do it," said Sir Horace.

"Some disgraceful intrigue!" the countess snapped.

"I'll be shot if it was!" cried Sir Horace in the plain accents of the truth. "The prince isn't that kind of man at all!"

The countess' face cleared a little.

"But why did you do it?" she asked.

"We didn't," said Sir Horace firmly; then he added in a careless tone, addressing apparently a small clump of rhododendrons on their left: "His highness is a man of strange ideas. He believes what some poet or other—he's always reading poetry; what he finds in it I can't think—said about aversion being necessary to true love."

"But what has that got to do with it?"

"Well, no one would be likely to feel aversion for his highness," said Sir Horace.

The countess' eyes opened very wide in sheer amazement; then she laughed a short, rather breathless laugh, and cried:

"*Mon Dieu!* But it is true! You English are mad—quite mad!"

"Not mad at all!" said Sir Horace huffily. "Some of us are a bit eccentric."

The countess paused, her brow furrowed by a perplexed frown.

"I don't know what to do," she pondered.

"When you don't know what to do, it's generally best to do nothing at all," Sir Horace suggested sententiously.

The countess shrugged her shoulders with a rather helpless air.

The prince and the princess had strolled out of sight of Sir Horace and the countess. The prince looked back, saw that they were out of sight, turned sharply to the left, and quickened his pace a little. He led the princess through shrubberies and across smaller lawns, pointing out this and that charming nook to her, and at last brought her into a delightful arbor beside a pond covered with the broad leaves of lilies.

"But how charming!" she said, as she sat down on the cushioned seat. Then she added in a somewhat perfunctory tone: "I suppose the countess will find us."

"Oh, yes; in time," the prince agreed carelessly. "In fact, I feel sure that Sir Horace will bring her here—if he knows the way."

"At home it would be quite irregular that we should be alone together. My sister Hilda and Friedrich were never once alone together till they were actually married," said the princess, in the tone of one wholly unruffled by the irregularity.

"Then your unfortunate sister escaped a good deal of weariness, for of all the bores I ever met, Friedrich is the worst," said the prince with deep conviction.

"He did talk a great deal about German politics and the socialist crisis. He said it was the greatest crisis in the history of Germany—many times."

The prince looked at her quickly. She was gazing through the doorway of the arbor at the lily pond with limpid eyes.

"You had me there," he laughed gently. "But I'll never talk about politics any more—unless you ask me to."

"That is not likely. I don't understand them," said the princess.

The prince took his cigarette case from his pocket, opened it, and held it out to her.

She looked at him in extreme surprise.

"B-b-but I thought we were never allowed to smoke," she protested.

"I always consider it a friendly bond," he said, smiling at her. "Besides, you do smoke, you know."

The princess hesitated; then she smiled.

"Ever so privately—only with my brother Karl," she confessed. "The countess doesn't know. How did you know?"

"I divined it. I have, for all my ancestral mug, a sympathetic nature."

Each took a cigarette from the case, and he lighted them. She blew a little

cloud of smoke with an air of great enjoyment.

"But this is so nice!" she said, smiling at him.

He found the dimples, which were an integral part of the smile, uncommonly attractive.

"It's so much nicer for me."

"Why?" asked the princess.

"You have only the beauties of nature to enjoy."

She smiled again, looked at his face with grave consideration, and said:

"I don't know why you should be discontented with your—ancestral mug. He was so much more interesting than most kings."

"He was certainly a hard walker and a hard worker," said the prince. "But, oh, his character!"

They smoked for a little while in silence. The prince looked at her all the while; and now and again she looked at him. Finally she said:

"You look more like your ancestor to-day than you did yesterday."

"Was I looking very repulsive yesterday?" he inquired anxiously.

She laughed gently, but did not answer. He found her laugh charming.

"By the way, about that photograph. Why did you have that photograph printed? It's the worst photograph that was ever taken of any one. You know quite well that it is," he said earnestly.

She flushed faintly and touched her cheek with a nervous gesture.

"The scar is there," she murmured.

"Oh, if one had a magnifying glass! But in the photograph, it's enormous. It—it throws a dark shadow all over your face. It distorts it. But actually it's no more than a beauty spot."

The flush deepened in her cheeks, for he spoke with warm animation and conviction.

"The photographer said that the light caught it like that. It was an accident."

"But why did you have that particular photograph printed? Why did you send it to my aunt?"

"The scar is there," she repeated, touching her cheek with the same nervous gesture. "I didn't wish to—to have it hidden—to—to—what is your phrase?—to sail under false colors."

He understood how sensitive she was about the disfigurement, how it had weighed on her, filling her with a perpetual doubt of her attractiveness, exquisitely painful to a girl. A wave of pity swept over him.

"My dear child, you're wrong about it—absolutely wrong!" he said earnestly. "There isn't any scar at all, really. It's no more than an extra dimple—it isn't really."

She looked at him with grateful eyes, but she shook her head.

"But I give you my word of honor!" he cried. "Look here, this is perfectly absurd! I shall have to convince you, I shall really. But—but—of course, I can't to-day. It would be too—too precipitate, don't you know?"

She flushed again, smiling at his heat. Then she said in a low voice:

"Perhaps—if anybody could—you might be able to."

A sudden light shone in his eyes.

"I've a jolly good mind to prove it to you here and now!"

She quivered at his look and tone; and then, ringing from the other side of the lily pond, came the voice of the Princess Anne crying:

"Richard! Richard!"

"Here we are!" called the prince; and, rising, he added in a lower tone of deep conviction: "I *will* prove it to you—so there!"

She looked up at him with luminous eyes.

"Were you joking yesterday or to-day?" she asked softly.

"Yesterday—yesterday," said the prince.

CHAPTER XIV.

Before she and the Princess Frieda had finished breakfast next morning, the Countess Fersen made up her mind for good and all to inform no one whatever of the supposititious prince. She was too grateful to the real prince for the pleasing change that his entrance on the scene had made in her charge. The princess came to breakfast her old light-hearted self. The listlessness with which she had been wont to face the prospect of hours of John Stuart and the greatest crisis in the history of England had wholly vanished.

The prince devoted himself to the business of love with uncommon ardor. He spent all his days and most of his evenings with the Princess Frieda; and he spared no effort to make those evenings delightful. He believed that he could compass that end by spending as many hours as possible alone with her; and she did nothing to hinder him from doing so.

At three o'clock one afternoon, they were to motor together. At a quarter to three, a happy thought came to him, and he came down the steps of the palace to the car wearing an air of uncommon content.

The princess, the prince, the Countess Fersen, and Sir Horace took their seats in the tonneau; and in it they remained till they got out of London on the Birmingham road beyond Kilburn. Then the prince stopped the car.

"I'm going to drive," he said. "Would you like to sit in the front seat, princess?"

"Oh, yes!" cried the princess eagerly.

He had helped her out of the tonneau and into the front seat before the countess could form a polite protest.

The prince started the car, and said to the princess in a tone of quiet satisfaction:

"I don't think it's worth while being in a car unless you're in the front seat."

"It isn't," the princess agreed with conviction.

"We do think alike about things, don't we?" he said, smiling at her.

The prince drove carefully indeed. It had rarely fallen to his lot to drive a car containing so precious a burden. Besides, he could not have talked to the princess so freely had he been driving fifty miles an hour, and he wished to talk to the princess. But as they came out of Watford, he asked her if she would like to go fast; and when she said that she would, he drove the six miles to King's Langley in seven minutes. As he slowed down at the beginning of the High Street, she laughed with a thrilled delight.

"I never went as fast as that before," she said in a hushed voice. "It's a delightful sensation."

"You don't find enough straight, clear road as near London as this to get much of it," he said regretfully.

In the middle of the High Street, he turned off to the left, up the hill, on to the plateau. He drove slowly along the winding lanes, allowing her to enjoy fully the quiet beauty of the meadows and woods. He made a circuit round Chipperfield Common, and then took the road to Boxmoor. Half a mile beyond Flaunden, he stopped the car at the foot of a little hill crowned with a pine wood. As he had observed on an earlier drive, a steep, very rough wooded footpath led up to the top of the hill.

"There must be a beautiful view from the top of that hill," he said. "What do you say to exploring it?"

"I should like it," she said eagerly.

He turned and told the countess what they purposed doing. She looked at the eager face of the princess; then, with a rueful sigh, she rose and stepped out of the car, prepared for martyrdom.

She did not realize, as the prince had realized, how quickly he and the princess would be out of sight of her slowly climbing self and Sir Horace. But she perceived at once the futility of trying to overtake them.

They went slowly. Steep as the hill was, the prince went up the greater part of it sideways, giving far more attention to the face of the princess than to the difficulties of the way. The air seemed to quiver with the dull hum of a million insects. Two or three birds were singing. They seemed to be alone, far from the world, for the countess and Sir Horace climbed and perspired in silence.

The last twenty feet of the path were steeper than ever, and set with sharp, jagged flints. The prince and the princess paused before it, surveying it.

He looked down at her little feet, and said in the most matter-of-fact tone:

"These flints will cut your thin shoes to pieces and your feet, too. I'd better carry you."

Thereupon, he picked her up.

"Oh!" gasped the princess. But she lay quiet in his arms.

He carried her up to the top of the hill slowly, very careful not to slip. When he set her on her feet at the top, she was flushed and breathing quickly.

"But you are strong!" she murmured.

"No. I couldn't have carried any one else up that bit," he protested. "But you—you diffuse a magnetic inspiration."

She laughed softly.

"But you are strong—very strong," she repeated.

He, too, was breathing quickly, and they stood looking at each other. Her eyes fell before his. He made half a step forward and stepped back.

"And now for the view," he said in a somewhat uncertain voice, and turned to the right.

They moved slowly between the bare trunks of the pines. She saw two squirrels playing in the tops of one of them, and they stopped to watch them. Then they went on, and came to the edge of the wood on the very crest of the hill, and looked over a wide stretch of country set with meadows and corn-fields and woods. Away to the left gleamed the silver expanse of a pool, and from it ran a winding stream—a shining silver ribbon among the green.

"Oh, but it is beautiful!" she murmured in a hushed voice, gazing over it with wide eyes and parted lips.

He let her gaze her fill, and then said:

"You had better rest after your climb."

She sat down, set her elbows on her knees, rested her face on her hands, and let her eyes again wander over the scene. Presently she murmured:

"There is nothing so beautiful in the North. There is more grandeur and— and majesty, but it is not so beautiful. This touches the heart."

"I know," said the prince.

She turned and looked at him with grave eyes. Then she said:

"I never dreamed that you could be so sympathetic."

"But the moment I saw you I knew that you were the most sympathetic creature in the world."

"But I—I didn't think that you did see me. You looked like—what is it you call it?—a stock."

"I looked like a stock," he said slowly. "Well, you've certainly inspired the stock with life."

"Highness! Highness!" cried the voice of Sir Horace in the wood.

"The world intrudes," said the prince.

"It always intrudes," she cried impatiently.

"It won't always. Shall we——"
He paused.

"Highness! Highness!" cried the voice of Sir Horace, nearer.

"No. It shan't always intrude," the prince declared with conviction.

He slipped his arm around her and drew her to him. Her heart was beating fast, but not as fast as his own.

"You won't mind marrying me, Frieda darling, will you?" he asked wistfully.

"You know that—that I shall love it," she whispered.

Their lips met in a long kiss, and he lifted her to his knee, crushing her to him.

"You're the darling of the world! The most beautiful, the most charming, the most delightful creature in it! And I shall never deserve you—never!" he cried, and kissed her again.



YOU'VE GUESSED IT

LADY, when you went away,
 You remember how I acted—
 How I evidenced dismay,
 How I looked—and was—distracted?
 Well, if now I do confess
 That I haven't missed you greatly,
 That I've managed, more or less,
 To replace you, adequately;

If I tell you that I find
 Life a pleasant thing without you;
 If I tell you that my mind
 Hasn't troubled much about you;
 If I say that other dames
 Give me gentle consolation,
 (Mentioning, of course, no names,
 Lest I cause a complication);

If I say that our good-by
 Left me very far from tearful;
 If I tell you now that I,
 While you're gone, am very cheerful;
 Should I give you dope like that,
 It need not arouse your ire—
 You could smile with glee thereat,
 For you'd know me for a liar.

BERTON BRALEY.



The Portrait

By Frances Harmer

Author of "The Painting of Perdita,"
"The Helping Hand," etc.



THERE came a pause in the fluent stream of reminiscences. The two men sat silent with the débris of the banquet between them—a débris that Kito, Laurence Hale's excellent Japanese servant, now began deftly to remove.

"Paris"—a note of regret sounded in the host's voice—"Paris in the war time! You've had your luck, Jimmy."

Jimmy Grey—whose dress clothes were out of date and shabby, and whose hair was thinning on the top—glanced about him. His old friend's suite was exquisitely furnished and situated in one of those costly, private, and astoundingly well-run hotels bordering on Fifth Avenue.

"Some luck here," he answered. "I hear that no débutante approaches her season with confidence unless you paint her portrait."

"Then a forgotten diffidence should grace this winter's buds," mocked Hale. "The fiat has gone forth—I'm resting from portraits and—going back to nature!"

Jimmy laughed. Then he resumed his questions:

"What happened to Gregory—the male beauty we always made sit for us?"

"Married money and lost his perspective."

"Curtis?"

"Went in for artistic photography."

"Alice Dent?"

"Painting the Rockies, on canvases thirty by forty."

"What became of—that quiet little thing with the enormous eyes? We used to call her 'Astarte,' don't you remember? They were almost out of proportion."

Hale's face seemed to cloud, but only for a moment.

"She married. He went broke—died. She's hung on to her relatives—I fancy for the sake of her child."

"Poor Astarte!"

Long after Grey had gone, with a promise to return before he should brave submarines for Paris, Laurence Hale sat over a dying fire.

"Astarte"—Phœbe Chichester. He had not thought of her for a long time now, a matter for congratulation, for he could hardly think of her without at least regret. That fiery soul tamed by poverty and convention! Those wild dreams of ambition lost in waking hours of subservience and sordid toil!

"Does art make a man less of a man?" he asked himself. "When I went to see her after Berwick's death, I meant to offer her all that I had. I

came away silent, because that shrieking child of hers spelled eternal disquiet. One must have peace—to paint.”

For nine years, he had not seen anything of her, had heard of her only at intervals, though they had plenty of mutual acquaintances. For three, perhaps, he had hardly thought of her. To-night, by a curious coincidence, he was to attend the opera as a guest of a relative of hers, a Mrs. Alexander Gerard, who had been very kind to Phœbe and her daughter.

At this point, Kito, with an air at once profoundly deferential, affectionate, and firm, brought his master's overcoat, opera hat, and gloves.

“Oh, I'll come up to scratch,” growled Lattence. “At forty-four, I mustn't begin to loaf.”

He went out into the soft, rainy November night. His musical taste was yet in an embryonic state, but he had promised to look in on two boxes, besides occupying a seat in Mrs. Gerard's. The famous portrait painter was under-going siege. A number of old friends had besought him to make *one* exception, and paint Gladys', Lily's, Isobel's, or some one's, portrait. The sittings made agreeable variations in a debutante's routine. There were, of course, other portrait painters, but Hale was a giant, the recognized leader of them all. If he only would, for old time's sake? But he had proved adamant.

“So glad you came! Three people disappointed me. Alleged reason, grippe, but Truth's far too far away for me to find her!”

Mrs. Gerard was a stout, imperial woman, well lighted up with diamonds and swathed, to-night, in cerise velvet. Hale shuddered as he bowed to her. Madge, her daughter, a slim, sparkling creature, was more agreeable to look at, but he detested a nervous giggle of which she was not yet cured. Then his eyes strayed to

the other occupants of the box, and he started.

“You *know* Phœbe, don't you? Mrs. Berwick?” Mrs. Gerard chattered on. “And Imogen? I'm introducing her with Madge. *Pairs* in buds is the idea, this season. Heavens! One can't talk with that row going on.”

The “row” was the “Valkyrie Chorus.” Hale, soon sated with Wagnerian vocal thunder, let himself look at Imogen Berwick.

She was the “Astarte” of twenty years ago, plus something, minus something. Plus a face less disproportionately small for the flamboyant size and blackness and glow of the eyes; plus a far more beautiful complexion and an air of physical well-being; minus—

“She's absolutely soulless,” Hale told himself. “A butterfly, intent on sweets, and a butterfly furnished with a sting, or I never read a face.”

Two young men came into the box at the first intermission, and engaged the young ladies. One, being an ineligible, also held the attention of Mrs. Gerard. That left Hale free to speak to Phœbe Berwick. He wondered if any memory of their parting in Paris recurred to her. From midnight till two, with the easy etiquette of the Latin Quarter to befriend them, they had stood on the Pont Neuf. Oh, to want anything now as he had wanted her—then!

She was changed. Only two years his junior, she looked fifty. Her hair was nearly white, her small face lined. The eyes, too, had lost their glow, and even, it seemed, their size. They were sunken under her brows.

But—here the artist came to the aid of the man—what a spiritual loveliness shone from them! How sweet and strong were the lips! What calm, born of self-abnegation, sat on the lined brow!

“Jimmy Grey dined with me to-night.

We were talking of you." It seemed a felicitous introduction.

"I've been thinking of you, and talking of you, for two days."

Her voice had a pathetic little unsteadiness that gave him a swift pang of pity. How differently he would have ordered her life, had she intrusted it to him! He would have saved that beauty on whose wreck he now looked; he would have kept alive the happiness she had forgotten. But—his desire was ashes. He felt only pity.

"Why?" He could think of nothing else to say.

"I've been nerving myself to ask a great kindness of you."

"Oh, ask me anything."

His heart lightened. To help her—that would place him on a quiet plane again. He was aware of the tumult of emotion now, and he shrank from it.

"I've often thought of asking you the same favor," she went on. "I'm thankful I did not, for now—it means so much more. Do you remember telling me I had room but for one thing at a time?"

"Yes. Art was all to you—in Paris."

His soul shrank away from the passion of the moment when he had made the charge.

"And then—Reggie."

He winced.

"Naturally."

"And now—Imogen."

"That, too, is—natural."

"No, not quite. I—I—feel that I wish to be free of her, to live a little again, before—before I'm too old. I can't for an instant"—no one was listening to them, but she lowered her voice—"make the usual maternal plea. But—oh, I can't tell you here!—I owe her a tremendous debt. I—I—impoverished her father. But for that, she would have the things she wants, young as she is, more than life. I've worked for her, in ways I've detested, to keep

her in her own set. If I had been free —"

She stopped. The curtain had gone up.

"Go on." Hale drew a little farther back.

Under cover of the overture, she spoke, softly:

"But I've given her what she wants—what he would have wanted for her. I've been a dependent, but she has had, more or less, what Madge has had, and she's been—almost happy. Now that she realizes how insecure is her tenure, that this one winter is all she can have unless—unless it avails to give her a permanent hold—don't you see how things are?"

"Can't she face life, mold it, fight her way? In *these* days?" he asked. "Matrimony, as a career, is obsolete!"

Phœbe Berwick shook her head.

"Imogen is primitive," she explained. "Laurence, my life, has been a failure. Art? I paint china and satin and chiffon gowns! Love! He died—and not happy! My daughter—oh, I want to make a success of *her*, before I let myself gather a few flowers by the wayside! I have twelve hundred a year, all I want—with *freedom*!"

He looked into her eyes, alight in the dimness of the box, and he understood. Before they parted, he had promised to paint Imogen's portrait.

II.

"No. More to the right, please."

The artist, palette on thumb, looked frowningly from the canvas to the sitter. He was painting her in black-and-gold draperies against a vivid crimson background. While the draperies followed, to a certain extent, the lines of the prevailing fashion in evening gowns, the effect of the golden robe and the black lace scarf was bizarre enough to laugh at dates.

"So?" Her smile was replete with

a joyous complacency he felt a barbarous longing to destroy. It had irritated him at every sitting. "May I talk now, a little?"

He growled consent.

"It's been so jolly, this sitting to you! It has *made* my season! I'd have been a nobody without it. It's put me almost at the top of my crowd."

"Magnificent ascendency!" He stepped back and surveyed her.

"Am I right?" she asked eagerly.

"I'm not looking at you, but at a blue shadow in the late. You can rest a minute."

She relaxed on her big chair as a kitten might have done.

"And they envy me, all of them," she prattled on. "'Really? Is he painting you?'" She intoned a mean jealousy, perfectly.

"And you like—to be envied?"

"Any girl would," she retorted, "who'd always been—just short of everything in a land of plenty. Taxis, where others had cars; seeing imported gowns on others when one had to have a dressmaker by the day oneself; old frocks when every one else had new! If I could have *done* anything distinguished—danced or sung or——"

"Such preëminence is purchased only by hard work."

"Yes, and I hate work! I love to *bask*! That's what makes me such a good sitter. May I say you said I was a good sitter?"

"I don't care what you invent."

His brush moved in quick, sure strokes.

"But that's one bad thing I don't do. I am truthful, really."

He looked at her then. She was lovelier than Phoebe had ever been—he could not deny that. The blending of Reggie Berwick's fine, fair coloring with Phoebe's Egyptian shades made for the enhancement of both. Imogen's perfect oval face was less white than the palest possible shell pink, the color

deepening on the cheeks, which were like petals. The eyes and hair were the blackest he had ever seen on a Caucasian. The little scarlet mouth hinted its pearls deliciously when she spoke. Then the flesh was wonderful, too, firm under its apparent softness. He had, in his youth, dabbled in sculpture, and he thought how well she would model. But, heavens, how he disliked her!

"Well?" She met his look composedly. "Anything wrong?"

"A good deal."

She sat erect.

"Show me how you want me."

"Altogether different."

"Another frock?"

"Another you!"

"Oh, a riddle!" She smiled. "I've heard you called 'the Sphinx.'"

He studied her. The face was hard and soulless—how often he had told himself so! She sat there, with the *beauté du diable* of her youth and daring, challenging him, and he was only—annoyed to the point of fury.

"I never knew your father!"—he saw her start—"but he was considered a good sort, a good friend. That's the ultimate test, after all. Have you any friend?"

"Crowds."

"Of people you like?"

"People who like me!"

"What is their reward—for liking you?"

"Why—knowing me!"

He laughed, grimly.

"You think that enough! What about your mother?"

"Oh, poor mumsey!" Her tone was lightly contemptuous, and his anger mounted. "She's a dear! She just *slaves* for me."

"And what is *her* reward?"

"Why—me, of course."

"You're not much to have, you know."

There was so much bitterness in his

tone that a shade of embarrassment weighted her laughter.

"Are all painters as impolite as you? Or do they only cast away their manners when they get to the top?"

In spite of himself, he smiled. Her face lighted up.

"I'm impolite in the capacity of your mother's oldest friend. Don't saddle art, or even success, with sins not their own."

"But—mamma's always nice to me."

"The result shows that she's spared the rod."

"Oh"—she was complacency itself—"every one says I'm spoiled."

"Men cannot gather grapes from thistles," he murmured, "and yet they don't wonder when they *do* find thistles proceeding from grapes."

He painted with firm strokes. The thing before him had leaped into life. He was doing his best work, and he knew it.

"Don't move," he commanded shortly.

There was silence for a long, long time, a silence so profound that Imogen could hear the hiss of the gas escaping from some prisoning chink in the logs of the wood fire, could hear the click of the maid's needles in the next room. Laurence Hale never allowed a chap-eron in the studio.

"There!" He put down his palette. "That will do."

"For to-day?"

"Forever."

"What?" She jumped down and ran over to him. "Is it finished?"

"All but the drapery and the background. I shan't need you for either."

"Oh!" Her eyes had clouded; her lips almost quivered. "Then—they're over?"

"The sittings? Certainly."

"I'm so sorry."

He began cleaning his brushes.

"Tell her to see about a taxi."

She gave the order and closed the heavy door before she returned to gaze

with fascinated eyes at the loveliness smiling at her from the easel.

"I'm so sorry. They've been so—wonderful," she repeated softly. Then she swung around and lifted her daring eyes to his.

"Aren't you sorry—at all?"

"Bless my soul, no!" he laughed easily. "I want to get down to Florida for Christmas."

Her lips quivered uncontrollably. She turned away.

"It's been awfully good of you to do it," she murmured. "I'm the only girl you've painted this season—aren't I?"

"The only one I'll ever paint again."

She pirouetted about.

"Delightful! I'm so glad of that!"

"Why?" he asked sternly.

"It's such a compliment—that you should choose me, over Madge—over all the others."

"And why in the world"—he was both amazed and angry at his own anger—"do you imagine that I made such a choice?"

"You—you saw me"—self-satisfaction curled her lips—"and—"

"And *wanted* to paint you?"

"So I suppose." Her eyes laughed triumphantly up at him. "You *did* it!"

He would *kill* that complacency!

"You're quite mistaken." He spoke curtly, watching the radiance, the butterfly joy, die out from her face. "Quite. I must not accept undeserved thanks. As a subject, I'd have preferred Madge Gerard." Here his conscience smote him. He was lying, and he knew it! "But your mother, your splendid mother, could make no request of me I would ever refuse. She knew that, and saved this—this distinction, as you are kind enough to call it—for your *débutante* year! I would have painted you, at any time, to please her. I would not have done it at all except to please her."

And then he was sorry!

The delicate rose hue, more like a

light than a tint, faded from the wonderful face lifted to his; the splendor died out of the eyes, black as a starless sky; the lips trembled. So she looked up at him for a minute, and then she seemed to crumble down on to the settee behind her.

"Oh!" she sobbed. "Oh! Oh!"

He had always been aware of the contrast in the youth of her body and what he felt to be the age of her soul. Now, as if a flash of lightning had shown him something seared, he saw that, all this time, he had really been transferring to her the hate he had felt for Reggie Berwick—Reggie, who had won Phoebe! Here, sobbing at the needless, the appalling brutality of his words, was—a child! He bent over her in a swift impulse of remorseful pity.

"Don't cry." He could think of nothing else to say. "Don't cry—Imogen."

It had always been "Miss Berwick" before.

"Oh, you don't like me! You don't like me, and I thought you did!" she wailed. "I didn't know——"

"Please stop." Now he remembered the maid, who must have left the telephone. "Come, come, be a good girl and stop."

She looked up.

He never really knew how it happened. There came times when, recalling it, he was not sure that she had not stretched out her arms. But what was sure was that she was in his, and that he had kissed the trembling mouth and tear-wet eyes, the round, firm cheeks, even the warm throat, as he was ashamed to think he could kiss any one.

"Oh, then, you do like me," she breathed, and had fled, in a moment, to the inner room, to change her dress.

He called the maid, to wait for her. He would not see her again alone. He was in a tumult. His pulses were leaping.

She went by him with bent head and a murmured word of farewell. The

maid preceded her, to make sure the taxi had come. It was snowing rather heavily outside. Still, she did not linger, evidently did not want to see him again. The heavy door closed, and she was gone.

III.

No factor in the whole delight of having your portrait painted by Hale was more prized than the studio tea, of which function you were hostess—care of your chaperon—and to which you could bid whom you would. Laurence Hale remembered this tradition of past years as he saw the framed and completed picture. He had been out of town for a week-end, had golfed hard, and thought he had at last driven that unpleasant moment in his studio, when he had done the thing he himself most mercilessly condemned if he heard of others doing it, from its throne on his consciousness.

"Before *that* comes off"—he was thinking about the tea—"I must put things right with her."

For he had fought his way, more or less, back to sanity. He had recovered the perspective destroyed by contact. She was, he now admitted, a child, younger than he had believed, but she was still of the butterfly species, she was still soulless, and she was still—Reggie Berwick's daughter. He, Laurence Hale, was most certainly not in love with her! And if there were moments when the memory of that slim, trembling form in his arms, of those warm, quivering lips touching his, stirred him mightily, even convincing him that he must always, now, know a longing not to be stifled, he regarded those moments as a man fighting a drug might regard the periods of his wildest craving. That is to say, he did not wish his madness to recur; he only desired that he might overcome it forever.

And then—he thought of Imogen.

Was it possible that she could—care?

"Pshaw!" he mocked his graying hairs. "I was her father's contemporary!"

Before the tea, he must see her, must explain matters. Deciding this, he turned again to the portrait.

The background was a curtain of a wonderful red. Against this, on a carved black chair with gold inlay work, Imogen sat, erect, queenlike, in a robe of cloth of gold, arms, neck, and shoulders bare. A scarf of black lace, misty, indefinite—Laurence did not believe in reproducing patterns—threw one dimpled shoulder into sharp relief and softened the glare of the robe under high lights.

Imogen herself—her oval face, with its radiant tint of palest rose, illumined by the dark luster of her eyes—looked a reincarnation of Cleopatra. Her lips smiled faintly, challengingly. For all its beauty, it was a soulless face, and it was, curiously enough, *not* a young face! Ages of greedy longing, of covetous snatching, seemed to have matured it.

"Mr. Grey," said Kito softly, at Hale's elbow.

"Oh, show him in."

Laurence welcomed the diversion. Besides, he was always glad to see his old friend.

"Jimmy!"

Grey, shabby, smiling, content with mere life, contemptuous of externals, went to the heart of the picture at once.

"Who is she? What a devil!" He spoke admiringly, his criticism being reserved, for work, not for character. "Why"—recognition came with a leap—"not—Astarte?"

"Her daughter—and Reggie Berwick's," replied Hale. "Think those shadows too dense?"

"You might clear that one." Jimmy pointed. "But no *girl* looks like that, Laurence. You've painted all the sin of all the ages into her eyes."

"I hope no one else sees it. I have the tea next week, and it goes to Brutt's Exhibition of Modern Painters immediately after—and I to Florida, thank Heaven!"

"If I had a daughter," said Jimmy Grey, "I'd hate to have that exhibited as her picture."

He went away. Laurence scribbled a note to Phoebe, setting Monday for the tea and asking that Imogen give him one more brief sitting. Not a word had been exchanged between them up to now. He had heard of her gayeties, of her "chances," but he had not seen her. A California millionaire was paying her marked attention, and she was decidedly one of the most distinguished of the winter's buds.

She came with her maid, as usual, changed into her golden robe swiftly, and took her place. He worked a little, making transparent the shadow Grey had condemned.

"Come and look at it," he said suddenly.

She obeyed, and stood by his side. She was silent for some time. He remembered that she had been perfectly satisfied before.

"What makes it look—so *hateful*?" She spoke with repressed energy. "I'm not like that!"

"You have never seemed to me"—for once he was glad of the personal note he so often avoided—"to have much in the way of a soul, you know."

She breathed rather quickly—at his side.

"You—you put what you *imagined* into the picture," she whispered. "It's not fair!"

"Perhaps you can understand me a little better if I tell you something," he answered gently. "I loved your mother, Imogen, years ago—when we were both studying art in Paris. I *hated* your father when he took her from me. You see, to me, you seemed much more his

than hers, and I—I admit it—I disliked you."

"Oh." She looked down. "But——"

"That," he interrupted, "is what I am so glad to explain to you. When you cried, you were—all at once, and for the first time—Phoebe's. It was as if *she* were here—in you. And—I had always loved her, remember. Now do you understand?"

He thought he had managed it exceedingly well.

"And that—that hateful look—you put in because you didn't like my father—is that still what you think of me?" She brought his eyes to meet her own compellingly.

"No," he answered gravely. "I shall try to soften it a little. I can't make the picture as beautiful as I could have made a picture of your mother at your age, because she—she *was* wonderful! *She* breathed—the upper air."

"The upper air?"

"She cared for things of value, of permanence."

"And I?"

"Don't you think, yourself"—he seemed to have erected, quite triumphantly, the barrier of his years between himself and that moment's indiscretion—"that you *are* a butterfly? Not a predatory butterfly, as I imagined at first—but—what do you care for except honey? Honey for your own eating, too? For example"—he was now enjoying his rôle of mentor—"do you appreciate your mother? Do you realize that she has bent even her genius to servitude for your sake? That if she had not longed to give you what she saw you valued, because it was not in you to value better things—society, gauds, trivialities that cost mere money—she might have lived a life of development and enjoyment—for herself?"

Imogen moved away from his side.

"She has never seemed unhappy," she murmured.

"You mean"—even to his own ear, his gentleness sounded a little priggish, parsonic—"that your self-blinded eyes have not seen her need—her starvation. That is why"—he felt as if he were closing a door on that moment, as if it need never haunt him again—"that is why I can't paint into *your* eyes the soul that is in hers."

Imogen went back to a study of the picture.

"I don't want the tea," she announced suddenly.

"No?" He resumed his painting of the shadows.

"Not unless that—that isn't quite so horrid."

"Who told you it was horrid? You were satisfied—the last time."

"You opened my eyes, you see," she replied very softly. "I haven't been at all the same girl since."

"Oh." Hale was embarrassed, now. "Then I hope you have been better—to her?"

"Better?" She moved restlessly about, but in his vicinity. "I've always been very nice to her. She would tell you so."

"I am *sure* she would." His intonation, reproachful, transferred the merit of any statement Phoebe might make to Phoebe herself.

Imogen turned so quickly that he had to look at her. In those marvelous dark eyes, he saw a depth, a passion, he had never dreamed could shine in them, a wistful longing, a pitiful appeal. And the longing to comfort her grew strong to madness. It had to be fought, with every weapon he could call to his aid—self-respect, studio tradition, the claim of maidenhood on manhood—every one!

"Let me finish this sitting to-morrow," she said, crossing to the door. "Perhaps then I can bring you a soul—to paint."

And she had gone.

IV.

The duality of man's nature was forever established with Laurence Hale after that night of struggle. Part of him—the lowest part, he assured himself—wanted Imogen Berwick, wanted the youth of her, the beauty of her. Part of him realized that to supplement Phoebe's sacrifice by the holocaust of himself, possibly of his art, on the altar of Imogen's greed for dominance and pleasure would be madness itself. His whole consciousness was a battleground for contending forces, and flight, even before the studio tea, seemed the only course open. He would not marry Imogen. He would not give her the satisfaction of knowing that she had conquered him, that his knowledge of her, his power to pierce through the fastnesses of her loveliness into the void behind it, were vanquished by the thing he denounced as inadequate.

The sitting she had asked she did not claim. He waited in his studio all day. The early December dusk had fallen—fallen beautifully, with a clear sky and the sharp, cool breath of snow-crossed air—when he decided that he must go home and dress for dinner.

And then she came, came alone.

"I slipped away from a tea. Got Madge to drop me here," she explained, throwing her coat on a chair. "Look at me!"

A soul had been born in her, and shone in earnest eyes, through nobler lines, on a mouth whose strength was sweet, whose sweetness was strong.

"There are things I won't tell you," she said, and never had the musical softness of her voice struck him so before. Perhaps it, too, was new today. "But this one thing I will. I told—mother—that it wasn't me, after all, it was—she—that you wanted!"

Hale could only stare at her.

"When—you kissed me," she went on, standing straight and slim before

him, looking up at him, "I thought—you *did* care. I knew, by then, that I did! I was—so very happy. I told her. She—she was glad—I *thought*!"

"Good God!" Hale reflected bitterly that the longer you kept from indiscretions, the more severe seemed their consequences. "You told her?"

"Yes, but it's all right. She knows now that it isn't me—it's her." Imogen's vocabulary was hardly more childish than she looked, standing there before him. "I said—how you'd never forgotten—how you had hated—poor daddy. I hardly remember him, you know. And now, now that I've done that—made her so happy, when I was so miserable myself—am I—so bad?"

Hale turned from her, his arms folded, and walked over to the window. The dusk had deepened into evening; lights sparkled through the clear and frosty air.

Already his limbs chafed under the shackles. Already he was in bond to the debt of his folly. That folly, not his kisses where he layed, but his pusillanimous denial of his love! Poor Phoebe! He must not add shame to her sorrows. He must keep what Imogen had interpreted as his word.

"And mother," went on the soft voice, with that new note of sadness in it, "gave me this for you. I told her I wanted to sit alone—just once more!"

The horror of the contest—for himself, between two women, and those two mother and child—was as ashes in his mouth. He took the note Imogen gave him and tore it open:

DEAR LAURENCE: The child has blundered somehow; I feel that. But even if she has not—even if she brought me a true word from you—my answer is what it was on the Pont Neuf! Oh, can't you understand? I want to be free a little while, before the end comes.

I found Reggie too little for my longings. He lost heart and power to work and life, because I could not love him

enough, could not put him before my longing to get back my freedom—and my art. Oh, surely you understand *that* longing?

His death shocked me into vowing reparation to his child. I made it, according to lights that I see now were darkness. I gave her duty. I never gave her love. I told you that. The pose of devoted mother has been irksome, but I thought I owed it.

And now—*why* did you kiss her? I wonder if I dare hope that you are to open the doors of my prison, set me free from duties I have not done very well, by taking her off my hands. Don't, if you shouldn't. She *may* forget that kiss. She is so young. But if you can, how happy I shall be!

PHOEBE.

While he read, Imogen had crossed to the fireplace. The red light fell

over her white frock, outlined with a ruby halo her bent black head.

For Laurence Hale, the gates of youth swung back, readmitting him to its holiest joys.

"Imogen"—now his voice was not steady—"your mother—understood. She gives you to me. Will you give yourself?"

And he lost, too soon, the wonder in her eyes, as he caught her in his arms again.

"Yes, to-morrow at ten," he said. "It will take a long sitting—to paint in that soul."



IRISH WONDER VERSES

(From the Old Irish)

OF THE BEAUTY OF DEIRDRE.

ONCE was a woman so fairer than fair,
A woman more white than the sun is white,
That reapers tied up one lock of her hair
For lamp, as they threshed in the harvest night!

OF THE SPEED OF CUCHULAIN.

So swift could Cuchulain, the champion, run,
So swifter than wind or than wingless word,
That wherever his swift feet lighted or spun,
On the tips of the grass not a dewdrop stirred!

OF CUCHULAIN'S CUTTING.

So glassy and smooth were the chariot poles
That Cuchulain cut out of the oaken core,
That the flies of the air, alighting, poor souls,
Tripped over and fell on the treacherous floor!

OF DEIRDRE'S BEAUTY.

These eyes that Deirdre once have seen,
By Deirdre's lover now made blind,
Yet cannot weep. The memory there
Is worth the sight of womankind!

SHANE LESLIE.



The Cue

By Carl Mason

GOOD morning, colonel." Jimmy spoke as he sidled up to a big, broad-shouldered man, partly leaning on the top rail of the fence that encircled the track. "You ain't gonna forget your promise to consider the Don as a prospect for the string, are you?"

"The Old Man," as the colonel was more often called, when not around, turned from where he stood, viewing the work of putting the track in condition for the spring training, and looked down into a ruddy, freckled face and blue eyes, topped off by a bushy head of brick-red hair.

Boy and man looked at each other. They made a picture in contrasting figures, such as David and Goliath might have made. The Old Man stood nearly six feet four, and weighed close to two hundred and fifty pounds; Jimmy was nearly four foot six, and weighed in at less than a hundred. However, this light weight did not signify that Jimmy was sickly or a weakling, for he was neither. Nor was it a drawback to his career—rather, in his favor. A jockey is not supposed to be much of a heavyweight.

"You're gonna give the Don a show, ain't you?" continued Jimmy, as the Old Man stood looking him over in silence, the hint of a smile stealing around the corners of his big, kindly mouth.

"Why, he's a roan," he said, "and

his hair curls. He's off color, and bad breeding's sticking out all over him. It'd be a waste of time and money to get him into shape."

Jimmy was not to be put off so easily. "That might be," he answered, "but he's got speed—lots of it. I know it. I've watched that horse since he was a colt, and, what's more, he's got sense."

The Old Man raised his eyes from the boy at his side and let them wander over toward the center of the track, where some twenty-odd thoroughbred horses stood eagerly nipping the tender blue-grass shoots. It wasn't hard for him to pick out the Don. He was more rangy and taller than the others, and, worst of all, he was a strawberry roan, and his hair curled a bit, a sure sign of bad breeding.

Something had gone wrong with this horse. The bad blood of some renegade ancestor had cropped out. It looked as if the unrefined corpuscles of the mustang of the plains had in some manner become intermingled with those of the aristocratic strain of the Kentucky blue-grass district. The result could mean only one thing—the Don was an outcast.

The Old Man had no use for this horse. Neither did the "super," the "swipes," or any one else, excepting Jimmy. Jimmy loved him as a mother loves the black sheep of her family; he saw good qualities in the big roan, where all the rest found only bad traits.

To prove his statement—that the Don had sense—Jimmy stretched out his hand and gently called:

"Here, Don, come here."

The big roan did not need a second invitation, for he knew that the outstretched hand held some delicacy for him. With a whinny of recognition, he slowly and awkwardly ambled across the ground to the little mite of a lad, and after first sniffing the bit of sugar, greedily licked it up and begglingly nosed for more.

"That's all, old pal," Jimmy said, patting the horse's broad neck and letting his hand run down across the ponderous chest and on over the powerful shoulder.

"Some muscles, old scout," he complimented.

The Don had a habit of shaking his head as if he understood and agreed with everything Jimmy said. Perhaps he did, so close was the tie that existed between horse and boy.

"Look at that neck!" Jimmy went on to the Old Man. "Look at those shoulders and legs! Why, he could go all day and not blow a bit!"

These compliments, however, were lost on the Old Man. Other things were claiming his attention, and he put Jimmy off with the unsatisfactory answer:

"I'll see to-morrow, when I pick the string."

He left Jimmy dejectedly standing at the fence, and turned to where the oval track that surrounded the pasture was being harrowed, dragged, scraped, and rolled.

Jimmy's disappointment was keen when he realized that his arguments had failed to extract a further promise from the Old Man to select the Don as one of the racers. Out of the twenty-odd horses standing in the velvety grass, only five would be chosen for the training. To carry more than five on

the circuit was out of the question with the Old Man.

"Train five well, and you're better off than with ten only half trained," was his motto, and always had his system been good. There were few who could boast of more winnings than the Old Man.

Jimmy, with a heavy heart, left the pasture and started for the stables. Around him there was the sound of whistling, the humming of popular airs, and occasionally a jest or a banter among the stableboys as they went about their work of cleaning and oiling the saddles. Jimmy heard none of this hilarity. He was in no mood for it, for he had grave misgivings as to what the next day would bring.

Nor did it bring any better results than he had expected, for at dusk the Old Man turned from the pasture with only four horses chosen, and the Don was not one of them. Filled with disappointment, Jimmy sought out his pal in his stall that night, and between pats apologized to the big horse.

"They missed you to-day, old scout," he said. "They don't know you or what you can do, like I do. You're like a nigger. Your color and the kink in your hair's agin' you."

The Don shook his head as if he understood, and rubbed his nose consolingly on Jimmy's shoulder.

To Jimmy's great surprise—and that of every one else—the next day, however, brought the unexpected. The Don was chosen to fill out the required number of horses. Jimmy never knew why, but the Old Man did. He knew that the boy's heart and soul were wrapped up in the big roan. He also knew what Jimmy meant to him as a jockey. He needed good jockeys as well as good horses. He wanted Jimmy's heart in his work and he knew that the way to get it was to grant the boy's wish. But, to Jimmy, when he sought out the Old

Man to thank him, he gave the bit of advice:

"Now, look here, kid. I don't want any time wasted on this off-color horse. It's a bad job, you understand?"

Jimmy said he did and hurried away, before the Old Man could change his mind. Straight to the Don he went, and broke the good news.

"Now, we'll show them the kind of stuff you're made of!"

Jimmy fairly slaved to show the Old Man that he had made no mistake in granting the lad's wish. It wasn't often that he had the opportunity to run the Don with the other horses. There was always some other horse to be ridden, something else to be done. The super was following out the Old Man's instructions—not to waste time on an off-color horse. But Jimmy held his peace, and worked out a plan of his own.

Five o'clock marked the close of the day's work. Three days a week, the Old Man and the super motored into the city for the night. On these three nights, the other jockeys, swipes, and followers of the stables, regaled themselves at the near-by village inn. The stables were left deserted, in charge of a watchman. The watchman smoked; he also had sundry other expenses, which he could not very well meet with his salary. Jimmy helped him to find a way to get the tobacco—also to meet the sundry expenses. In return for these favors, the watchman closed his eyes to anything Jimmy might do.

Jimmy did many things, especially after five o'clock on three days a week. These things consisted principally of leading the Don out onto the track and furnishing him with the proper training, which Jimmy felt he did not get during the day, when the other horses were being worked out. He could teach the Don what all the rest knew, with one exception. This exception was a big handicap, however. It was one

thing Jimmy could not supply. To him this one thing was a problem, a gigantic problem, which must be solved. It was in his mind by day; it disturbed his sleep by night. He *must* find a solution.

To run a horse by himself is one thing; to run him with other horses, many others, is another. That was the problem—to get the Don accustomed to running with other horses, to get him out of his long, swinging stride at the proper time into that marvelous burst of speed which Jimmy alone knew he possessed.

One day the solution of the problem came suddenly. Jimmy was sitting near the stables, brooding over the ever-present riddle. Near by, Mose, a negro stableboy, was putting "Spot," a precocious little fox terrier, through some of the tricks he had taught her. Jimmy casually watched the performance. The dog would sit up, roll over, pray, play dead dog, and do many others of the customary tricks taught dogs in their early youth.

"Up, up!" Mose called, and Spot squatted back on her haunches.

"Down, down!" Mose commanded. "Lay down, I say!"

Spot seemed to prefer to sit up, and Mose grew very angry, thereby attracting Jimmy's attention to the performance before him.

"Down!" Mose thundered, and this time Spot executed the command.

At that instant the solution to Jimmy's problem flashed through his mind. It was clear to him that Spot knew what was wanted of her by command. That command came to her in a short, sharp sentence, an emphasized word—a *cue*! If a dog could be taught that way, why not a horse? The problem was solved!

Evening after evening, Jimmy put the Don through his paces. He would bring him up to an imaginary barrier. He would teach him how to get away

with that quick bound which means so much at the very start of a race. He would then hold the horse to his long, swinging stride, past the first quarter, past the half, and up to the three-quarter. At the three-quarter pole, he would bring his whip down across the Don's rump with a sharp, stinging blow, at the same time calling sharply:

"Now, Don, *now!*"

At first the Don couldn't understand. The words were harsh. Jimmy had never been unkind to him before. At that, the words didn't bother him as much as the sting of the whip. True, it did not hurt much physically, but to his sensitive nerves, it was an awful shock. A blow—and from Jimmy! He couldn't understand that at all.

He resented such treatment. It was undeserved. It wasn't at all like Jimmy to do such a thing. Then he feared the blow would be repeated. He didn't want that. This fear lent wings to his feet, and down the track, toward the imaginary wire, he dashed, in a splendid burst of speed.

To the Don, the lessons were severe. However, Jimmy tempered them as much as possible. Gradually the horse began to comprehend what the boy wanted him to do. The resentment left him. The moral pain of the blow was no longer felt. The harsh words were softened by the knowledge that they and the blow were only a signal from Jimmy, a signal for him to throw his big body forward and attain the greatest speed he possessed, to reach the goal as soon as possible.

Evening after evening, boy and horse worked, teacher and scholar. Each understood the other, each loved the other, and through it all the Don learned his lines well and would never forget his cue.

"All aboard!" the Old Man shouted one morning, giving the word for the departure.

Into their palaces on wheels, the well-

trained, well-groomed horses were led. Their eyes were bright with life. Their coats, smooth and shiny, reflected the sunlight with a silken sheen. The Old Man looked them over and was well pleased.

"Well, I guess you followed out my orders, all right," said the Old Man to the super, as the Don was being led past. "You haven't wasted much time on that off-color horse. I see his coat looks a bit mussed yet." He grinned.

However, he did not know that Jimmy had seen to it himself that the Don was even better taken care of than the rest. If the Don's coat did seem a bit mussed, it was Jimmy who had mussed it, to accomplish the end it served—alike to deceive and to please the Old Man.

There was always excitement now—the tenseness of the start, the suspense of the race, the thrill of the finish. Some horse won, others got a "place," others "showed," and some "also ran."

The Don ran in one or two races. If he finished only in the money, the rest of the string did no better. The Don's percentage was as good as that of any of the rest—even better, all things taken into consideration. He probably would have won in one of the races, but luck was against him. He got into a "pocket," and could not break out in time to get into his burst of speed. Jimmy saw this and withheld the cue, and the Don never broke out of his long stride.

What bothered the Old Man most was the fact that the great event in racing circles was not far distant. He was still undecided which horse should carry his colors. He was irritable. Everything annoyed him. His heart—in fact, every horseman's heart—was set on winning this great classic of the turf. He had five horses he could enter. Out of the five, not one had a better claim to run in the race than any other.

When Jimmy went in search of the Old Man, he found him in this state of indecision, consuming a julep flavored with mint.

"What horse are you gonna run?" bluntly asked Jimmy.

"I don't know," candidly confessed the Old Man.

"Who's gonna ride?" pursued Jimmy.

The Old Man calmly looked the lad over from head to foot; then, after what seemed an age, he answered:

"You will, if you think you can win."

"I can——"

"I knew you'd say that," interposed the Old Man.

"If you'll let me pick my horse," continued Jimmy, paying no attention to the Old Man's interruption.

"The Don?" inquired the Old Man, anticipating Jimmy's selection.

"Yes. He ain't had a fair show yet, while the others have. They've run three races each to his one, and they ain't done any better than he has," argued the jockey.

The Old Man studied a moment, as if mentally checking up Jimmy's statement.

"He's awkward, ungainly, and besides, he's off color. I'd get the laugh if he lost," stubbornly the Old Man held out.

"But he won't lose," hurriedly interjected Jimmy, who saw by the Old Man's indecision that there was still a chance to get his favorite into the race.

"And if he don't win?" asked the Old Man.

"Why, you can do anything you want with him then. You can send him back to the farm. Why, you can even sell him if he loses that race."

The Old Man felt that there was something back of all the argument the boy was putting forth. He felt that Jimmy was offering some real sacrifices, should the Don fail to win. He saw hope, earnestness of desire, de-

termination, written all over the boy before him.

"I'll see," he said after a moment.

"You haven't got much time. Make it now." Jimmy didn't want to go through another such trial. He wanted the climax over with. "Go on, colonel, settle it now," he pleaded. "Let me ride the Don. Give him a chance and I know he'll make good. I've watched him ever since he was a colt. I know what he can do. I've trained him, ain't I? I ought to know."

The Old Man hesitated. He hated to give in, yet he had no other horse in mind.

"Go on, colonel," Jimmy pursued, following up his lead. "Let me ride the Don."

The Old Man was always a good loser. He had no argument with which to put Jimmy off, so at last he made a decision.

"Damn it! Yes—but remember you're carrying the blue and gold!"

"Thank you, sir," Jimmy was able to murmur as he hurried from the room. While he knew that, when the Old Man once gave his word, he would never go back on it, he didn't care to take any chances now.

The day for the great classic in horse-racing circles had arrived. The weather was ideal, the track perfection—in fact, there was nothing that could be offered as an excuse for failure. The best horse would win.

The preliminaries had been run. The great event, the "American Handicap," was next, and a flutter of excitement spread through the gathered throng in anticipation of what was to come. The band was blaring its crashing notes as the contestants began to appear on the track. Sleek, shiny-skinned animals they were, with nerves taut to the breaking point, moving about with quick, catlike jumps, as they passed in review before the grand stand.

The Old Man had just entered the betting shed. It was the old-fashioned kind, a long, low-roofed building. The *pari-mutuel* machines had begun to make their appearance here and there on the circuit at other tracks, but this one still clung to its old system of book-makers, with their little stands and their blackboards above, showing the odds offered on the various horses. One man, with a pair of powerful field glasses, surveyed the boards of his fellow "bookies," to see what odds prevailed, and from time to time changed the figures on the board above. Another man, usually with a big, fat cigar or a drooping cigarette in his mouth, accepted the bets and made out the pasteboard cards, which were either to be "cashed in" or torn up in disgust after the race.

The Old Man glanced over the board nearest him. Santar was the favorite, Gold Coin next, then Prince Chap, and so on down he read until he came to the Don's name. Evidently the betting gentry had no great fear as to the Don's chances of winning the race. One hundred and twenty to one was the quotation.

The Old Man shook his head somewhat disgustedly as he sauntered on to the next stand. The odds there were about the same. However, a change was being made. It was on the Don, and his odds shrank from one hundred and twenty to one to one hundred and fifteen to one. It wasn't much of a change, but it showed that some one was laying some money on his horse. Some one thought well enough of either the odds or the horse to risk a little change. Little did the Old Man think that it was Jimmy's money which had forced the odds down.

"Humph!" the Old Man murmured to himself, as he strolled to the far end of the shed.

From there he turned and surveyed the whirling, wriggling mass of human-

ity, pushing and pressing one another aside, anxious to get a bet down on their choice. The fever of chance seemed to be in every one's veins. The hope of gain pulsed through all this surging and resurging mob.

Again the Old Man looked up at the nearest board. Things were beginning to change. It was evident that three horses were well thought of. Santar was still the favorite, but was now closely pressed by Prince Chap, who in turn was followed by Redbird.

Redbird, the Old Man knew, was a good horse. He had seen him run before. The track and the weather, the weight—in fact everything was to the horse's liking. For the moment, the Old Man was tempted to do something he had never done before in his life—to bet against his own horse. But it was only a temptation, and like a good Christian horseman, he put temptation behind him and placed some money on the Don. It wasn't much, but it upheld his traditions and convictions. By the time he received his ticket, the odds on the Don had gone to one hundred to one. The bookies' opinion of the Don had not changed much—there wasn't much to make it change. The bets were all being laid on the other horses.

Outside, on the track, the bugle sounded, calling the horses to the post. The Old Man emerged from the shed, out into the sunlight. He shaded his eyes and looked out onto the track. Just then Jimmy went by on the Don. Some one near the Old Man laughed and called out in derision:

"Oh, you giraffe!"

It was his horse—it carried his jockey and his colors. Resentment for a moment rose to the Old Man's breast and he felt strongly inclined to reward the scoffer with a punch in the nose. But there wasn't time—the horses were coming to the barrier; so the Old Man took it out on the ticket in his hand, crushing it in his clenched fist.

Realizing what he had done, he straightened it out with a smile. If the Don should win, it would be a credit for ten thousand dollars; if he lost, it would be just pasteboard.

"And pasteboard it will be," the Old Man mused as he placed it in his pocket.

Just then the starter, irritated at not being able to get the horses off, in a bellowing voice filled with anger, called:

"Say, you, number eight, if you don't bring that roan to his feet and lead him down here with the rest, I'm gonna leave you at the post."

The grand stand, filled to overflowing, dotted with variegated feminine trimmings, echoed back this admonition with a laugh. But few, if any up there, had bet on number eight.

The laugh annoyed the Don. Unused to the noise about him, the many people, the strange horses, the unfamiliar sounds and sights, he threatened for a moment to bolt and vault the inside fence, to get away from it all. Then he felt Jimmy's hand pat him lightly on the neck, and above the din he heard Jimmy's voice, and he felt that amid all this vast, hostile multitude he still had a friend and a protector.

"Steady, old man!" Jimmy murmured to him, and patted his sturdy neck. "Don't forget your lesson now."

The Don nervously shook his head as if in answer, and straightway remembered the many hours of training. He forgot the other horses, the hideous noises about him—forgot everything but that Jimmy was with him and that Jimmy had taught him. Up to the barrier he came with the other horses. His limbs trembled; his ears twitched back and forth, as if the better to receive any command Jimmy might give; he was all alert, anxious for the word to go.

Like so many arrows aimed at one target, the eleven horses stood taut, their muscles, their nerves, their very

souls, screwed to the breaking point. Then the barrier was released; with a swish and the lightninglike speed of an immense bowstring, it sped across the track. Simultaneously, like so many arrows released, the eleven horses catapulted forward.

A cheer went up from the multitude in the grand stand; to them it was a perfect start. But something happened that instant which the spectators did not see. Next to the Don was Lady Irma, a trim little bay mare. In her forward bound, she swerved to the right, and her body came in violent contact with the Don's big frame. The blow was quick, sharp, and violent; behind it was the force of powerful horseflesh. Another horse would have staggered, perhaps gone to its knees under the sudden blow, but the Don's ponderous hulk withstood, and gave not an inch. It was Jimmy's left leg that received the full force of the impact, and was left crushed and bleeding, helplessly dangling.

For the moment Jimmy felt no pain; the excitement and the shock deadened it. The Don had made a perfect start; his first bound had brought him in the lead with the rest. A few more strides and he gained the always coveted position nearest the inside fence.

The jarring now brought pain to Jimmy's leg, a sick feeling to the pit of his stomach, a dizziness to his head. Unconsciously his hand drew in on the reins. The Don did not understand why he should be checked now. He felt a rush of exultation, something he had never before experienced. He was running with other horses, many of them; he was running easily; he was their master. But Jimmy had pulled the reins; Jimmy knew what was best; Jimmy had taught him what to do; so the Don obeyed. At that moment they were rounding the curve, and the Don slackened his speed and fell back, losing his position to Redbird, while Santar

and Gold Coin rushed past him to do battle with the new leader.

The Old Man raised his glasses and surveyed the horses through the trailing cloud of dust.

"It's all off," he murmured disappointedly. "The kid's foot's out of the stirrup and his leg's bleeding."

Inch by inch, those behind the leaders were closing the gap that separated them. Then something happened. Lady Irma put forth a supreme effort and sprang into the lead, which she held with a pace that was killing. A cry went up from the grand stand:

"The little lady will wear them all out!"

It was this cry that brought Jimmy to his senses, in spite of the pain in his leg. It was this cry that reminded him where he was and what he had to do. It was this cry that brought to his mind the promises he had made to the Old Man.

The Don was holding his own. His long stride stood him well in need. Lady Irma was tiring. The pace she had set was too fast to hold. She weakened and dropped back, losing the lead. Three horses passed her. This placed the Don in third position again, Santar leading, with Redbird just hanging on.

By this time they had passed the first quarter. Jimmy heard a roaring in his ears. Before his eyes there seemed to be a mist—a thin mist, but blinding. He raised his hand to brush it away. He saw more clearly then—saw two horses ahead of him and another close beside, and heard the thundering hoofbeats of those behind. How he would have enjoyed all this if it hadn't been for the pain in his leg, the mist before his eyes! He felt the Don's deep, regular breathing, and knew by this that the horse was still fresh, that the pace was not telling on him, that the race could still be won.

At that moment those behind pressed

forward and closed the gap that separated them from the three horses ahead, and for an instant it seemed almost as if a blanket might have covered them all. Then Prince Chap burst forth from the group and sprang into the lead, but not for long. He set a pace no horse could stand. However, he served a purpose. Santar, too, could not hold his place, and fell back as the Don moved up, his nose almost touching Redbird's haunches. It was Redbird now who led.

The mist before Jimmy's eyes came again. It wasn't a thin mist now—it was red, blood red. He raised his hand to brush it away again. He couldn't. It would not leave. It was now that Jimmy realized that he was fast losing consciousness. Then something flashed into his mind and for a moment raised the mist again. There was something he must remember, something compelling, something on which everything depended—the cue!

At the half, things were about the same; only it was clear to all the spectators that the race would be fought out by three horses—Redbird, Santar, and the Don. The others didn't amount to much; they were by this time "rank outsiders," "also rans."

All through the race so far, Jimmy had not said a word to the Don. To the Don, this seemed strange. It had never happened before. That Jimmy was with him, the Don was sure; he felt the weight. To-day it seemed heavier than ever before. Jimmy wasn't helping him. Jimmy was just holding on. Something was wrong, but the Don couldn't tell what. He knew Jimmy was there, and that was all he wanted to know. Everything would come out all right as long as Jimmy was with him.

The blood-red mist before Jimmy's eyes was growing darker. It was almost a brown now. It would be black before long. Then what? Would it

be black before he could give the cue? Could he hold the saddle until that great moment came?

"The three-quarter must be near!" seemed to drone in Jimmy's ears.

With superhuman determination, he forced the now almost black mist from before his eyes and looked. Just ahead, not over ten strides, he saw the pole, but vaguely. The effort caused him to lurch in the saddle. He realized that in a few moments consciousness would be gone. One thought, one desire, possessed him—to reach that pole and give the cue. Over and over in his mind it rang:

"Now, Don, *now*!"

"One, two, three," he counted, as the Don rose under him. The red was almost black now. "Five, six——"

He couldn't wait any longer; will power could no longer dominate his failing strength. He couldn't use the whip; he had no power to strike the Don, had he wished to. He fell forward on the horse's shoulders, buried his hands deep in the flying mane, and just as the red mist turned to black, his last bit of strength exerted itself in a whisper:

"Now, Don, *now*!"

In that instant the other horses bounded forward, putting forth every ounce of their endurance for the finish. Redbird was in the lead, closely pressed by Santar, who had gained his second wind and had forced himself ahead of the Don in the moment when Jimmy had lurched in the saddle.

The Don, like all large bodies, started slowly. But in a flash, by that whisper, he seemed galvanized into lightninglike action. Past Santar he swept, with Jimmy leaning forward in the saddle, his face buried in the dusky mane.

Instantly, with a shout, every one in the grand stand rose to his feet as one man. Such riding had never been seen before. This was something new. No one wanted to miss it.

Down the stretch the Don thundered. He seemed no longer a horse—he was as a whirlwind, a tornado, an avalanche, all mixed together. For the moment he forgot Jimmy, forgot the crowd, forgot the noises, forgot everything but the lesson he had learned back in the blue-grass district.

Shout after shout arose as he swept around and past Santar, past Redbird, past the grand stand, and under the wire—a winner!

The shouts blended into pandemonium, then suddenly, as if shut off by some giant silencer, they ceased instantly. Then a woman laughed hysterically, and fainted.

Three strides past the wire, the black before Jimmy's eyes vanished entirely, and with it his consciousness. His hands relaxed. He slid from the saddle to the track, rolled over once or twice, and then lay still, as the onrushing horses, unable to swerve to right or left, swept onward and over him, leaving a torn and dusty bundle of blue and gold on the track behind them.

A few strides more and the Don stopped. He missed something. Maybe it was Jimmy's slight weight, perhaps the spirit that had dominated him. He raised his head and whinnied, whinnied as he had when he had been an awkward, ungainly colt back in the blue grass, when Jimmy had used to bring him sugar. Then he trotted back to where a surgeon was examining the little bundle on the track.

Jimmy blinkingly opened his eyes and in wonder looked around the white room of the hospital.

"Did we win?" he asked quickly, looking up into the Old Man's beaming face.

"You sure did," drawled the Old Man.

"I knew the Don couldn't lose," pursued Jimmy. "You ain't gonna sell him now, are you?"

"I should say not! That is, if you'll tell me how you made that roan do that last quarter. We've run him three times since and we can't get him out of that canter of his. How'd you do it, kid?"

"How long do I have to stay here?"

asked Jimmy, evading the Old Man's direct question.

"I guess, if you're real good, you can get out in a month," the Old Man answered. "But how did you do it?"

"I'll show you then," said Jimmy, as he turned over for a nap.



"WHO HATH DESIRED THE SEA"

LOVER of mine, you are calling, crying;
Mured in the hills, I hear you sighing.

Oh, for a day of gold and blue!
Oh, for your free and fluent line,
Your song in my ears, your thirsting hands,
And the old Norse joy that is mine!
To be gripped and shaken and thrown by you,
Flung and fondled and known by you,
Comrade and sweetheart! Alone by you,
To drowse on the sun-soaked sands!

Oh, for a gold-and-silver night!
For your rippled velvet, heaving, heaving,
From ankle to shoulder subtly weaving
Cool caresses, that yet must sting—
Lips of water that cling and cling!
To lift and drift on your cosmic swing,
To throb with your moon-drunk might!

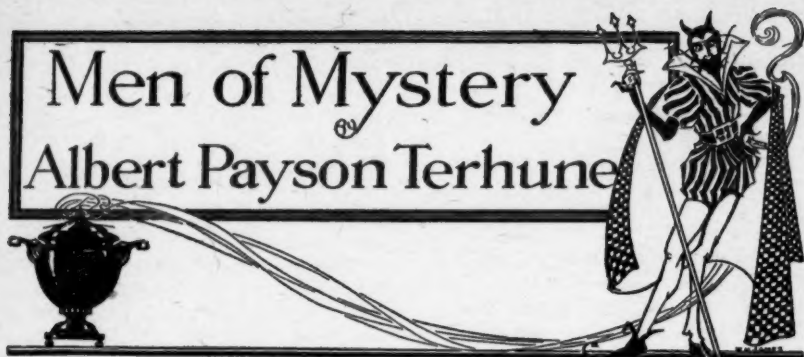
And if you clutch the breath,
If on your lips
There sits and sips
The white kiss, death—
What is my life, you should not take it?
What is your thirst, you should not slake it?
Soft would I lie and silently,
Dew-cooled the burning heart of me,
Had you your jealous will, O sea!

Lover of mine, you are calling, crying;
Mured in the hills, I hear you sighing.

MARGUERITE MOOERS MARSHALL.

Men of Mystery

Albert Payson Terhune



Kaspar Hauser: the Man from Nowhere

A SHOEMAKER of Nuremberg, Wiechman by name, was scurrying back to his bench from a domiciliary visit to the corner alehouse on Whitmonday, 1828. Being no longer thirsty, Wiechman was in a hurry to get to work again. Being in a hurry—or perhaps because of the good brown ale that had oasised his day's toil—he did not guide his steps as carefully as he might.

That was why he all but ran into a young man who was leaning against a house wall. Turning to apologize, or to swear—according to the rank of the stranger—Wiechman did neither. Instead, he blinked, open-mouthed.

The strange youth was crouching in a grotesque posture, his hands shielding his face as if to shut out the light. He was dressed in ill-fitting shirt and riding breeches and in a jacket made by chopping off the tails of a frock coat. His shoes were huge and old and worn through the sides, bespeaking a long foot journey. Yet, when the lad stepped forward, as Wiechman spoke to him, he toddled like a two-year-old baby. He could not stand straight or control his legs. His arms were outflung, to hold his balance.

Now Wiechman himself had known times when locomotion was no easy task. But even after a record effort to overwork the poor brewery employees, he had never staggered in this interesting fashion. So he questioned the boy.

The latter lisped out an incoherent word or two, as might a child who is just learning to speak. He repeated the name of a cavalry captain whose house was near by, and to this house Wiechman piloted him. The captain was not at home, and the visitor was propelled to a shed in the back yard. There he tumbled over onto a pile of straw, crumpled his body up into an awkward lump, and promptly fell asleep.

When the captain came home, he was told of his queer guest's presence. Out to the shed he went, followed by his soldier servant. The lad was still asleep. Nor did a sharp word of query awaken him.

So the captain and the servant put into practice a few of the tender expedients known to Germany's gentle soldiery for the awakening of drunkards. The boy slept on. At length, "after many troublous and painful ex-

periments on the sleeper's capacity for feeling," the efforts of the two were crowned with triumph, for the guest opened his eyes.

He stared with infantile glee at the captain's gaudy gold-braided uniform. But that stare proved to be his sole contribution to the evening's entertainment. The captain turned him over to the police. He was searched. Two articles of interest were found in the pockets of his ragged clothes.

One of these was a fine cambric handkerchief in whose corner the monogram "K. H." was worked in red silk. The other was a letter, part of which I shall quote. It ran:

1828. From a nameless place near the Bavarian frontier.

HIGH-BORN CAPTAIN: I send you a boy who wishes to serve his king in the Light Horse Regiment. His mother brought him to me to rear. I do not know who she was. She says his father was a light cavalryman. I have given the child a Christian education. I have taught him to read and write. Do not ask him my name or whence he comes, for he does not know. I will not sign my name, for fear of punishment. If you do not want him, get rid of him.

The note's handwriting was disguised, and effort had been made at illiteracy. The note itself was in German, but the following postscript was added in Latin:

He has been baptized, but you yourself must name him. He was born April 30, 1812.

The police questioned the lad. They could get nothing out of him. His intelligence seemed less than the average dog's. As a last resort, some one put pen and paper before him. As he could not talk coherently, or understand a word, this seemed the height of folly. But he picked up the pen at once, dipped it into the inkhorn, and wrote legibly the name: "Kaspar Hauser."

Finding he could write, the police grew hopeful. Orally and on paper, they showered him with questions. But

he understood none of them, nor could he write anything further than those two words, "Kaspar Hauser." The tracing of these, with a pen, was evidently the extent of his education. From the initials on his handkerchief, the police gathered that the name was his own.

Presently he began to fret and whimper, as might a tired or scared baby. A policeman suggested that he might be hungry, and beef and beer were set before him. But at the first smell of this hearty diet, he fell into convulsions. When he had calmed down a little, a glass of milk was handed to him. In curiosity, he tasted it; then shuddered and thrust it from him.

Plainly, he had never tasted meat or liquor and was not used to milk. One sort of food after another was offered. He turned from all with genuine loathing. The police chief, disgusted, said that bread and water was the best diet for a chap who could not appreciate better fare. A plate of dry bread and a mug of water were put before Kaspar. Greedily he consumed them.

Then various toys were shown to him. He was afraid of them all, until his glance rested on a little wooden horse. This he kissed, and hugged it to his breast, as if it were some dear and familiar plaything. Then suddenly he fell asleep once more.

"Been brought up on bread and water and had a toy horse to play with," was the terse police comment. "Been kept in the dark, too, for the light hurts his eyes. He's an idiot. Send for a doctor to look him over."

The nearest doctor was called in. By some rare chance, he was a man of sense. Instead of accepting the police theory that Kaspar was an idiot, he made a careful examination. Then he announced that the lad was as sane as any one, but that he had never been

taught. He had been left, mentally, as ignorant as a two-year-old.

The doctor went on to examine Kaspar's body. The patient was short and stocky, with fine curly hair and small, well-shaped hands and feet—decidedly not the feet and hands of a peasant.

The feet interested the doctor more than did any other part of the boy. Their soles were rounded and pudgy, like an infant's. They had never been flattened by walking. They were covered with blood blisters, from the few steps he had taken since Wiechman found him. On one of his arms was a half-healed wound.

His face was expressionless, but with the blankness of inexperience, not of idiocy. His blue eyes were clear and bright, but vacant. When a kind word was spoken to him or when he was playing with his wooden horse, "a lovely, smiling, heart-winning sweetness diffused his features, with the radiance that is in the joy of an innocent child." His hands were almost as helpless as his feet.

"He stretched out his fingers stiff and far asunder. Where others applied but a few fingers in lifting small objects, he applied his whole hand in a most uncouth manner.

"The peculiar formation of the knee joints showed that he had been habitually confined in a place so narrow and so short that he had been unable to lie at full length. His common posture was to sit bolt upright, his back against a wall, his legs at right angles to his body."

The doctor, as Kaspar sat thus looking at him, snatched up a knife and thrust it angrily at the boy's blank face. Kaspar neither flinched nor winked. He did not know what it meant. But when the doctor picked up a walking stick, the lad shrank back and whined like a cowed dog.

All Nuremberg, all Germany, all Europe, were presently abuzz with ex-

citement over the strange youth. His story was told and retold, in print and by word of mouth. He became the mystery of the day, a mystery that no one could solve. His case did not make sense. For one thing, there was his ability to write his name, when he could not speak it or understand it, or read or write anything else; for another, the fact that he had presumably traveled on foot from the Bavarian frontier, and yet could not walk ten steps alone. Also, though he was not an imbecile, yet, at the presumable age of eighteen, he knew nothing.

The evidence that he had always lived in a cramped and dark cell, faring on bread and water, and with no daily companionship but that of a toy horse, and that he had apparently been beaten often and cruelly—all this roused a flame of sympathy and anger.

Science came to the rescue. Professor Daumer, one of the wisest men of his day, assumed the legal guardianship of Kaspar, took the boy to live at his own house, and began his education.

Daumer taught him as he would have taught an infant, and at once he found that Kaspar was not only sane, but brilliant. The lad learned with almost uncanny quickness. In a very few months, he could read and write and talk; the vacant look left his face; he was normal in every way.

But he still gazed on life with the eyes of a child. For example, he asked why some men wore dresses while others wore trousers. When Daumer explained that the wearers of dresses were not men at all, but women, he was still more perplexed. He had no idea what a woman was, and when Daumer told him, he was not at all interested. Daumer introduced him to the women and girls of his own family and of the neighborhood and bade him study them.

"I like the old ones best," reported

Kaspar. "The young ones are so silly and noisy and they laugh too often."

Like a child, he was warmly affectionate to every one who was good to him, and was piteously afraid of every one who was cross. He did not know the difference in value between a copper and a gold coin, nor was it easy to make him understand values.

At times, when he was tired or scared, he grew homesick and begged to be sent back from the noise and glare of the world to the gloomy quiet of his old cell. And it was only by slow degrees that Daumer could teach his system to assimilate other food than bread and water.

But the professor was wise and patient, and Kaspar rewarded him by a swift expansion of mind. His sense of hearing was abnormally acute, and he could see in the dark as well as a cat. He took vast pride in the simple accomplishments Daumer taught him, especially in the matter of table manners. He scolded the professor's dog with great severity for lapping food from a dish on the floor, and tried hard to teach the beast to use a fork and a napkin and to sit in a chair at the table. When Daumer explained that this was impossible, Kaspar could not understand why, for, up to then, he had supposed that dogs and cats and horses were human beings like himself; and when Daumer told him that they were not, he asked a volley of questions that would have floored a whole conference of theologians.

Least of all could he understand class or social distinctions, or see why the garbage man was not quite as worthy of respectful salute as was Herr Binder, Mayor of Nuremberg. Religion, too, was a stumblingblock to him. Daumer told him God could do anything.

"Can He give me back the childhood and boyhood you say I have lost?"

asked Kaspar. "And if He can, please ask Him to."

Latin and Greek and German and French and mathematics and music and drawing he easily mastered. He did not know enough of life to do or say anything wrong. He did not even know how to tell a lie.

"He is a creature of angelic purity," wrote Daumer. "He displays the most exquisite moral feeling and a perfect love of truth."

As soon as Kaspar's brain began to work normally, his dormant memory began to awake. Bit by bit, he recalled scenes from his past. After a time he knit these fragmentary scenes together into a more or less coherent story. And this is the story he told:

His earliest recollections, he said, were of a hole or cave—probably a dungeon—where he had sat on the ground, clad in a dirty shirt and a pair of torn trousers. Soon he outgrew the cave as well as the clothes. He could not stand upright or lie at full length in his cramped quarters, but had to prop himself against the wall or else curl up in a heap.

The dimmest light filtered in. He never saw the sky or the trees. There was scant difference between night and day.

Every morning when he woke from sleep, he said, he found a pitcher of water and a loaf of bread beside him. That was his daily fare. Once in a while, the water would have a queer taste. At such times he would fall asleep again, almost at once. On waking from this drugged slumber, he would discover that he had been washed and dressed in other clothes and that the cave had been cleaned and swept; also, that his tangled hair had been combed and clipped and his nails cut.

Two wooden horses and a faded sword knot were his only possessions in the cave. He never saw the face

of the man who fed him. He never saw him at all, in fact, until one day the jailer came into the cave wearing a black mask and carrying a little table. Setting the table in front of Kaspar and laying pen and paper on it, the masked man put the pen into his hand and, after many trials, taught him to write the words, "Kaspar Hauser." He also taught him to speak one or two detached phrases, whose meaning the pupil did not understand.

Later, the man appeared again and gave him lessons in walking. This he did by standing behind Kaspar, lifting him, placing his own toes under the boy's heels, and taking a few steps forward. After a few of these lessons, the masked man stayed away for some days. Kaspar grew lonely and howled for him. The man reappeared—this time with a club—and beat him for making so much noise. One of the club blows had festered into an ugly wound on the prisoner's arm.

Again, not long afterward, the jailer came back, lifted Kaspar on his shoulders, and carried him away. Followed a confused sense of night travel in a rumbling vehicle, and of drugged sleep by day. Then—loneliness and a cruel flood of sunlight—and Wiechman, the Nuremberg cobbler, asking him questions.

That was the story. So illogical and far-fetched was it that many people at once declared Kaspar to be an impostor. A far larger number believed his tale, word for word. For a time, all Europe was rent by Kaspar and anti-Kaspar factions. A dozen different theories were formed as to the lad's birth and history.

But even a nine days' wonder cannot hope to endure for more than nine days. Niagara Falls is perhaps the most wonderful sight on earth, yet people who live near the cataract often forget to glance at it as they pass by.

So, though throngs of eager folk rushed to Nuremberg at first, to stare at Kaspar and to question him, as time went on, he became an old story. No longer was it needful for the mayor to warn crowds not to annoy him. A bare handful of sight-seers strolled to Doctor Daumer's house, where lately hundreds had flocked. Even the news that the young man was writing his memoirs stirred hardly a ripple of interest.

On the morning of Saturday, October 17, 1829, Kaspar walked to market with Miss Daumer. On the way, he was seized with a chill. He hurried home and to his own room.

At dinner time, he could not be found. The house was searched. At last Daumer discovered the boy lying senseless in a pool of rain water in the cellar. He was bleeding from a dangerous wound in the head. Taken upstairs, and roused from his swoon, he was delirious and lay raving for more than three weeks.

When he came to his senses again, he told what had happened. He said he had heard stealthy footsteps in the hallway outside his room. Looking out, he had seen two men advancing toward him. Both were masked. One of them had struck him on the head with a hatchet. Then they had fled. Kaspar had picked himself up and had staggered downstairs to find Daumer. In his dizziness and pain, he had gone all the way to the cellar, and then had fainted.

This murderous assault revived public interest in the youth. Some cynics said he had wounded himself for this very purpose. But a woman who lived across the street swore that she had seen two men run out of Daumer's house on the day of the attack, and that one of them had halted a moment at a fire bucket, to wash blood from his hands. Another woman testified that a man had asked her, in the street,

an hour later, if it were true that Kaspar Hauser had been murdered.

Henceforth, for a while, two policemen were detailed to guard Kaspar day and night.

Soon after this, his character took on an odd change. He reached the phase in his education where he learned how to lie. It is an accomplishment that comes to most children—temporarily or otherwise—between the ages of four and eight. And in Kaspar's case, it took a virulent turn.

He acquired other knowledge about life, too, and gave promise of becoming as gay as once he had been saintly. Truly there is no other innocence so complete as that of ignorance, nor are there two other words so often misused for each other. Kaspar's education was progressing along broad lines—not through Professor Daumer, now, but in spite of Professor Daumer.

The worthy professor was heart-broken at his pure young disciple's fall from grace. Indeed, the shock of it smashed the old fellow's health. He declared that he was too feeble to continue his task of educating the lad, and Kaspar was quartered on the family of Councilor Bieberbach.

The councilor packed him off to school. In his spare time, between lectures, Kaspar seems to have improved the shining hours—or the sinning hours—by making violent love to Frau Bieberbach. There was a fiery row in the councilor's family, a verbal battle that lasted for several days. It was interrupted in odd fashion.

One evening, the sound of a pistol shot brought the whole hostile Bieberbach family running to Kaspar's room. There lay the luckless wooer with a wound in his forehead—this time a bullet graze.

Once more public interest blazed up. Kaspar could give no clear account of the attack. But the fact that he had twice been wounded by some mysteri-

ous foe set tongues to wagging in futile conjecture. Also, the noble army of cynics acclaimed the mishap as another attempt on Kaspar's part to gain notoriety.

I should very much like to write this story of Kaspar Hauser without touching on any of the half hundred explanations of his mystery. Each and every one of these explanations is radically different from each and every other one. Yet they nearly all have been solemnly proven true by various chroniclers, and if I skip all mention of them, the mail bag at AINSLEE's will probably be clogged with "real solutions" of the case, by writers who cite the monograph of Professor von Something-or-other, of Dresden, or of Herr Some-one-else, of Munich, as their authorities. So here goes, as briefly as may be:

First of all, for the claim of Lang and the rest that the lad was a hysterical impostor, who carefully invented his story and who thrice wounded himself for notoriety's sake.

An impostor is a person who makes certain false claims for his own advantage. Kaspar Hauser claimed nothing, except that he had once lived in a dungeon too short for his body—a statement borne out by the doctors who examined him. He made no pretensions to anything that could bring him money or fame. And if he were shamming, then surely his genius as an actor could have won him a fortune elsewhere.

Second, it has been set forth that his father was a Hungarian noble who, for a mesh of wholly puzzling reasons, brought up his son as he would not have reared a horse and then threw him on the world for support, finally deciding to murder him.

Third, that he was the son of a German cavalry trooper and a peasant girl; in which case, it is hard to understand

the motive for trying to kill him and the elaborate cruelty of his upbringing.

Now for the fourth and favorite tale. Elizabeth Evans is its chief priestess, and a half score of authorities seem inclined to agree with her.

Karl Friedrich, Grand Duke of Baden, had two sons. The eldest was his successor, Karl. The younger was Ludwig, a melodrama villain. Ludwig wanted to rule as grand duke, but Karl was in his way. That did not greatly trouble Ludwig, for he was a patient man and willing to wait his turn for any reasonable length of time.

Then Karl and Stephaine, his wife, had a son and heir. This birth annoyed Ludwig. It seemed unfair that he should lose his turn at the throne for the sake of a squalling baby. He went for help to the wicked Countess von Hochberg.

The countess draped herself in white robes and sped through moonlit corridors to the baby princeling's nursery. All who chanced to see her gliding past mistook her for a pet phantom of the palace known as "the Lady in White." They not only let her move on unhindered, but it is credibly reported that several of them are still running at a lively clip toward the frontier.

Into the nursery glided that sinful and scareful countess. She lifted the sleeping prince from his cradle and put in his place there a peasant baby who was dying from scrofula—and who actually died a few days later.

She carried the stolen prince to Ludwig, who gave him over to a brutal accomplice, who in turn locked the child in a dark dungeon. In later years, Ludwig had a fit of remorse. He ordered the prince set at liberty. The prince, as the movie-educated reader has shrewdly guessed, was Kaspar Hauser.

The immediate public attention drawn to Kaspar cured Ludwig of his remorse fit. He feared lest the boy be recognized and placed on the grand-

ducal throne. So he sent emissaries to kill him.

Now let's get back to the real story, shan't we?

After his second wound, Kaspar attracted the notice of Lord Stanhope, a traveling Englishman. Yes, Stanhope has been called an agent of the crime-calcined Ludwig. The Englishman sent the lad to college at Ansbach. He planned to educate Kaspar still further and then to take him to England.

At Ansbach, Kaspar lived quietly enough for about two years, his only excitements being one or two alleged attempts on the part of masked men to steal his memoirs. In his nonstudy hours, he earned a little money by working as copy clerk in the local court of appeals.

On December 14, 1833, just before he was to start for England, Kaspar finished work early and left his lodgings for a walk. An hour or so later, he reeled into his home again, clutching at a mortal wound in his chest. He stammered out the disjointed words:

"Palace — Uzen — Monument — Purse!"

The police went to the Palace Gardens. There, at the base of the Uzen Monument, lay a violet silk purse. Inside the purse was a slip of paper, whereon was scrawled this queer message:

Kaspar Hauser, born April 30, 1812. Murdered December 14, 1833. Know by this that I come from the Bavarian frontier, on the river. These are the initials of my name. M. L. O.

That was all. Again the cynics laughed and said that these theatrical self-woundings were becoming monotonous. Stanhope thought otherwise—or pretended to—for he offered a reward of five thousand florins for the assailant's arrest. The reward is still unclaimed.

For two days, Kaspar Hauser lay dying. The doctors examining the

wound declared it had been delivered by a left-handed man. The police, spurred on by the proffered reward, scoured all Germany, chasing the usual wrong clues up the usual wrong tree. At the end of the second day, Kaspar awoke from a stupor and cried out like a frightened child:

"Father, Thy will be done! I am

tired, very tired, and I have a long way to go!"

Then, turning to the wall, he died. His secret died with him.

Who was he?

The May number of AINSLEE'S will contain the next article in Mr. Terhune's "Men of Mystery" series: "Saint-Germain, the Man Who Could Not Die."



THE WAITED GUEST

HAPPINESS, she came to me through the twilight gray,
Stepped from out the rain-blown night, through the mud and mire,
Past the gleaming castle lights took her vagrant way,
Tossed her mist-sweet mantle down by my gypsy fire.

'Gainst her breast an upland lark nestled from the cold;
By her-side a springtime fawn, dazzled in the light,
Shrank, and gazed with timid eyes from her kirtle's fold,
While the shower-dimmed sunset gold faded into night.

Far across the shadowed moor fares the palace road;
Golden scabbards, silver spurs, jingle to the gate;
Purse-fat merchants patient plod, weighed with costly load;
Velvet cloaks and scented locks roll in lackeyed state.

Speed they fast and speed they far, past the palace wall,
To the guarded castle keep on their eager quest,
Where the waiting feast is spread in the banquet hall,
Just to welcome Happiness and make her honored guest.

Happiness, she came to me through the twilight gray,
Crept from out the rain-blown night, through the mud and mire,
Past the gleaming castle lights took her willful way,
Tossed her mist-sweet mantle down by my gypsy fire.

MARTHA HASKELL CLARK.



Genius Incognito

By Gordon Young



CUB reporters are so proverbially successful in pulling in scoops that some people have often wondered why newspapers don't depend entirely on them. According to every fictionist who undertakes to spin a hero out of a cub, the youngster lands the goods where veterans tried and true have fallen down—and always gets his salary raised. Obviously a cub that doesn't make good is uninteresting. The one that does is usually a nature fake. But, nevertheless, here goes!

"What's your name?" demanded the rotund city editor of the *Morning Mail*, blinking his eyes at the tall, not so very confident young man who stood outside the railing and gazed wistfully across at the editor's desk.

A moment's hesitation followed. The young man seemed unable to recall just what his name was.

The city editor of the *Morning Mail* never swore under his breath.

"Oh, why—Charles Newton," the young man stammered hastily, somewhat impressed by the nature and emphasis of the editor's remarks.

"Newton, huh? Where've you worked?"

"Oh, lots of places."

Again the remark from the fat editor was decidedly audible.

"I mean in several cities," the young man added nervously.

"What papers?" the editor snapped. Newton mentioned two or three.

The city editor—sometimes known

as "Blustering" Brisco—eyed him incredulously, but for some reason, which he did not take the trouble to analyze, he liked the young man. Perhaps it was because he was confident that the youthful applicant was lying to him. Brisco always said that a man without resource wasn't worth a damn in the newspaper game, and that only molly-coddles begged for a job.

"All right," he growled. "Here's an assignment: Get out on it. Woman shot—that's all I know. There's the address, and I want pictures, name of man in the case, name of the other woman, and complete details. The *Mail's* a glutton for details. Get 'em." With that he turned to the copy before him.

Newton stood looking helplessly at the assignment slip. At the bottom was printed, in small "caps": "Bring back the goods—not reasons why you can't." There was also an address, but he knew nothing of the city, having been in it less than an hour. There was something about a story and details, but—

"In the name of—" Brisco only gasped. "You here yet! I thought I told you to get out on that story."

Newton stammered. He came near to saying something that would have proved disastrous to his chances of hitting the trail that leads to a Brisbane job, when an inspiration came.

"Nothing has been settled about salary. How much do I get?" he asked.

"Huh?"

"Salary—how much?"

It was said by men in a position to know something of the matter that Brisco would never pay a new man more than he would possibly work for, and never pay less than could possibly be squeezed out of the pay roll when the man made good. He looked Newton over carefully and snapped:

"Fifteen."

"Fifteen what?"

Newton was actually bewildered. He was expecting a salary—not a spending allowance.

"Dollars—each week. Good-by."

Brisco turned to his desk with a grunt of finality. Newton started for the door, looking enviously at the reporters in the local room merrily banging their typewriters.

As he stepped out of the elevator, a young man brushed hurriedly past him and entered the cage. Newton heard him give the floor on which were the editorial offices, and another inspiration popped up like a life-saver. As the elevator started up, he called:

"Hey, wait a minute! Come back!"

The lever was reversed and the elevator descended.

"Come here a minute, will you please?" Newton questioned, pointing to the young man.

"Who?" the other asked doubtfully.

"You."

The stranger stepped out impatiently.

"I thought you might be a reporter. Are you?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Come over here a minute where nobody can hear us. I want to tell you something."

Every reporter is bored and rebored by people who "want to tell him something." Clyde Kenyon was not interested.

"Listen," Newton began. "I'm a reporter, too. Just started about five

minutes ago. Never saw the inside of a newspaper office before. And now I have something that animated sugar barrel who sits inside the railing calls an 'assignment.' He said he didn't know anything about it himself, but he seems to have a fair imagination. Put me wise to what I'm to do, will you? I don't suppose I'll last long, but I'm not going to quit now."

Kenyon looked at him critically, carefully taking the measurements of the self-confessed cub. The measurements, as Kenyon saw them, were above the average. Newton was slender, a decided blond, with clear blue eyes and features rather delicate for a man. His manner was the exquisite, half-lazy, half-insolent, but not offensive manner of the born patrician. The lips were thin and had a way of tightening, as expressive as clenched jaws, heralding a sort of indomitable stubbornness that may make a man a hero or an ass.

"Running a bluff?" Kenyon asked.

"Call it what you like. I went after a job and unexpectedly got it. I haven't the faintest idea about this newspaper work. Did fairly well writing blank verse at college. Most newspaper stories sound like that for the first paragraph. Here's my assignment."

"Whenever there's a murder or a suicide, real or attempted, Brisco always insists on knowing the 'other man and woman in the case' and says you fell down on the story if there isn't any other man or woman. I don't see how you put it over on him."

"I've never told a great many lies, and I hated to tell that one to him. I thought it was going to be wasted. But, you see, I had a hunch that if I told him I was any greener than I looked, he wouldn't stand for me."

"Say," Kenyon decided, "I'll just give you a hand with this. I've nothing important on. Come on."

An investigation showed that the story did not amount to much. Some woman had failed in committing suicide and, though they didn't know it, Brisco had already had the *Mail's* police reporter cover the story before he had sent Newton out.

"Write it in your worst style, so he won't be suspicious," Newton suggested as he stood beside the typewriter, while Kenyon was turning out the story for Brisco's desk.

When it was finished, they went out to dinner, and Newton made a confession of his circumstances:

"I haven't been out of college long, and I don't know the first principles about anything. I've a little money to carry me along until I get a living wage. I'd like to make good."

As a matter of fact, his funds consisted principally of articles negotiable at the pawnshop, for of ready cash he had but little.

"And," Newton continued, "I was reading a newspaper on the train when I decided that since I had to do something, I would like to be a reporter. Soon as I landed in the town, I made a rush for the *Mail* office. At first I intended to tell the truth, but one look at that fellow's face warned me that I'd better not. Do you think my bluff'll work?"

"With plenty of prayer and a lot of digging, you may hang on."

At that same hour, Brisco was growling across the desk of the managing editor:

"I put a cub on to-day. First one in ten years. He had the nerve to tell me he'd worked on a string o' papers, and I thought he might be worth savin'. Then I sent him out on a story and he got Kenyon to write it—could tell by the style. A cub with that much gall, resourcefulness, and impudence, ought to make a first-class newspaper man in a half dozen years or so."

II.

One day Newton caught sight of Belle van Buskirk, as she passed through the local room, and he inquired as to her identity from Kenyon.

"Superintendent of the distillery department."

Newton wrinkled his forehead. The title was a new one to him.

"Talking of a moonshine outfit or something pertaining to a newspaper office?"

"She's queen o' the sob sisters, the make-'em-cry artists. She'd make anybody cry that read her rubbish. Makes me cry every time I think of the good space she wastes."

Newton rather eagerly interposed a comment. Kenyon came back at him:

"Good looking? Well, I guess I know that! But say—talk about haughty! The Queen of Sheba was a jolly good fellow alongside of her. She's some distant maiden, an iceberg in skirts, and doesn't like anybody around here but the pay clerk, and him only on Tuesday mornings for about two minutes. Oh, yes—and maybe Brisco. She's sort of a favorite of his."

That night Belle remarked to her sister, who had certain well-defined ambitions in the theatrical line, as they sat at dinner:

"There's a new fellow in the office—a reporter. Haven't been very close to him yet, but from a distance he looks like a gentleman."

It was a standing joke between the sisters that Belle was to marry a "rich man." Therefore Stella inquired, with a rising inflection to heighten the sarcasm:

"Is he rich?"

"Didn't I say he was a newspaper man?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon. I understood you to say that he looked like a gentleman."

Belle sat upright and laid down her napkin. Her eyes grew bright.

"If we begin making remarks about gentlemen and such things, I should like to cogitate on a few dissipated Thespians who draw real money for putting on heavy disguises and parading on the stage a short time each evening in the rôle of gentlemen. People actually pay money to see them do it, because it's so remarkable that they can even imperfectly play a part so foreign to their real natures."

Stella, who was known to admire Jack Whitney, manager and leading man of the stock company with which she had cast her fortune, while anxious to reply, knew herself to be no match for her sister. She acknowledged defeat by devoting herself ostentatiously to her dinner.

Belle had a remarkable command of language and considerable energy. While she frequently indulged in sarcasm in speaking of her profession—as all "lady" journalists do at times—other people did so in her presence at their peril. Which is the attitude universally preserved by both "lady" and "gentlemen" journalists.

III.

A few evenings later, Brisco notified Belle that she was to take a night trip through the tenement district to look for features. He also said that he would have one of the reporters go with her as an escort. Brisco was more of a gentleman than he looked or sometimes acted. Newton was selected, principally because he was worthless as a news getter and could be an escort as well as the brightest star.

When the fact of his selection was made known to him, he had just time enough to recall that he had one dollar and thirty-five cents in his pocket, and to realize that he was going to spend

the evening as the companion of a girl, and a very pretty girl, at that. The difference between an "assignment" and a pleasure trip was not clear to him because, to reiterate, Belle van Buskirk was a remarkably pretty girl.

He was biting his lip and cudgeling his brain as she stood some ten feet away receiving her final instructions from Brisco. He had never felt so humiliated in his life. He felt truly desperate at thus being poverty-stricken when going out with the only woman he had seen for months whom he was more than normally particular about knowing.

"I'm ready," Belle remarked, to bring him out of his discomfiting meditation.

There had been no introduction. Brisco had forgotten that.

Both were silent until they reached the street. Then Newton said:

"If you will pardon me"—and both laughed—"I will introduce myself. My name is Charles Newton."

"And I," she responded merrily, "am Belle van Buskirk, sob sister to Vox Populi."

Newton was trying his best to think of two things at once. One of them was Kenyon's remark that she was an "iceberg in skirts," which her action and smile belied; the other was more serious and had to do with some method of improving his financial condition. He was certain that they could not walk to the tenement district, some four miles away, and equally certain that he would not take on a street car any woman for whom he was acting as escort. He was also ignorant of how to get a taxi charged to the paper. But he was a chap who had no hesitancy in getting into complicated situations, with a sublime faith that his luck or his resourcefulness would get him out.

Cæsar won an empire by plunging into a river of cold water, and New-

ton showed himself to be almost as daring by hailing a taxi. His fingers closed tightly about the one dollar and thirty-five cents as the door closed on them. Belle was surprised at the introduction of the taxi, but she gave no indication of it, thinking that more than likely Brisco had told him to get it.

"If you don't object," he began, tugging at his collar in a vain effort to relieve the choking feeling, "I'd like to go to——" He stuttered, and finally gave a street number not far away, which chanced to be that of a pawnshop which he had visited on several previous occasions. The chauffeur was informed and drove away, the taximeter ticking viciously the while.

"To tell you the truth," Newton began, "I promised to take a trinket down here for a friend of mine. I almost forgot it. You understand?"

She smiled and acknowledged the necessary wisdom.

In the pawnshop, he slipped a ring from his finger and passed it across to the pawnbroker. The result was satisfactory to both parties. When Newton again took his place by the girl's side, and the machine started up, he could not even hear the taximeter.

She, being a woman and trained to observation, and, as all women are, quick to notice bits of jewelry, saw that the beautiful ring she had admired was gone. She turned her face away. Tears stood in her eyes, and there was a smile on her lips. She did not know whether to be angry or pleased. As a compromise, she was agreeable.

IV.

The next morning Belle sat moodily tearing peepholes into the veil of the future with her cards. She was less interested than usual in her favorite pastime, even though it was revealed that the man she was to marry not only

lacked "diamonds," but had a great quantity of "spades"—symbolic of much work and hard luck. She was going through the cards mechanically and did not notice. Her thoughts had reverted to the night before when she had sat in a taxi with an agreeable and handsome young man and had motored through the grim depths of the city's dirtiest streets, streets walled on either side by the bleak fronts of tenements.

The arms of her sister, who had come quickly and quietly into the room, were slipped about her neck.

"Belle dear," Stella whispered eagerly, "oh, I've the biggest secret on earth to tell you! I haven't even told mother yet—and I'm almost afraid to tell her. But you are a wise little girlie and you'll understand."

"What is it, Nubsey?" "Nubsey" was the name of endearment Belle used when she felt ashamed for the bitter things she had said to Stella.

"Jack told me last night that he loved me and—and—and—wants me to marry him!"

Belle flung her cards away, twisted herself around, and looked straight into her sister's face.

"Right out, point-blank, without any strings tied to it?"

"In so many words, and he said"—Stella was talking rapidly, for she had much to tell and only a half dozen hours of time—"that he knew it was a surprise to me—that he knew he had never shown that he cared for me—that he didn't know what I would think about it—but—— And then I said ——"

"Yes? What?" Belle questioned encouragingly.

"Of course I told him I was surprised—that I had never dreamed of such a thing—but—I would think it over and let him know——"

"Oh, Nubsey!"

The two sisters came together in a long, tight, loving embrace.

Jack Whitney was a man, not so young as some girls might have wished if they had intended marrying him, but good looking and on the square with every one of the Ten Commandments.

"Lucky girl," Belle commented, when they had regained breath, and she looked proudly at her sister.

"And you can bet I never let him know that all of these many months I've been simply crazy about him. And, Belle, you know I thought he was in love with that silly little brunette. Of course, I should have known Jack would have better taste. But when a man's in love, you can never tell how badly his eyesight is affected. Now, a woman is sensible. There must be something to the man she likes. Take yourself, for instance. You would never marry a man who was not ideal in every way. He must be good looking, have good manners, a good income, and——"

"Yes—he must be good looking and have good manners," Belle answered abstractly. "And, Nubsey," she added, with strained gayety, "when that time comes, I'll be glad to leave the jaundiced sheet that keeps me from being a beggar and to join the labor union of marriage. But it depends on the man."

It was on this same morning that Newton surveyed his cheap room from the lofty heights of his trunk.

"Perhaps some day I may enjoy this. They say distance lends enchantment. If I ever go to China, this old catacomb may look good to me. But I'd have to be a long ways off to appreciate the beauties of these scarred walls and this pock-marked carpet. Ug-h-h!"

From his pocket, he took a handful of money and mused on the potentialities.

"To move or not to move—that's the question. To hie me to a room where I'm not ashamed to let the mirror stand unveiled, or to bear the ignominies of

honest poverty and have cash on hand. To live within my income or take a chance."

He thought of the bright eyes, the merry laugh, of the girl who had ridden beside him, and concluded that it would be best to save the money for whatever situation might arise. Perhaps he would need another taxi, or maybe a dinner with flowers. Who could tell?

V.

Several weeks passed, and then Kenyon and Newton came near to having gleeful convulsions when Brisco gave Newton a small raise, for that, to them, was conclusive evidence that they had "put one over on the old man."

The passing weeks had also brought Belle and Newton together many times. He had called, had taken her to see her sister play, and two or three times had gone out to dinner with her and her mother, for the mother was cautious and Belle was discretion personified.

Brisco made a practice of taking long chances on stories from time to time when he got a tip, or, rather, the rumor of a tip. On such occasions, he would give a reporter an assignment with no more information than was included in the tip and tell him to bring back the dope. If one reporter didn't get it, another would be tried, and so on until the story "broke or blew up." It was rarely that the tip assayed pure news, but when it did, it was worth a year's labor.

Now Brisco had received a tip that Harry Rockenheimer, son of Rockenheimer—there was but one—was in the city incognito, stopping with friends who were concealing him from his father's detectives. Brisco had received the tip—and he it said that a tip is something that comes into a newspaper office from out of the nowhere, is always respected, and is sometimes accurate—that young Rockenheimer,

who had something of a reputation for getting into trouble, had had difficulties with his father and had disappeared. There were numerous editors confident that this was true and that detectives were looking for the young man, but no paper dared risk publishing the story on the unreliable facts at hand.

Brisco had known of the tip for some time—long enough to have tried out several of the best men on it with disappointing results. They had gone to all of the sources that could be tapped and had learned only enough to make them more excited. The report seemed to be true. It was a big story, a very big story; Rockenheimer's millions made it that.

When a story hangs fire in a newspaper office, the nerves of the editors and the men get worn; they live with the sword of Damocles overhead; they dream of seeing the scoop in the opposition paper, and rush for every new edition to make sure that it is not there. Brisco, who was almost always grouchy and, when not feeling so, simulated a grouch so as to appear natural, was more so than usual one afternoon when Newton stepped in.

"Here!" Brisco called. "Go out and interview Harry Rockenheimer."

Newton stood still, staring at him in amazement.

"Don't pose for a picture! Get out and interview Harry Rockenheimer—son of Old Man Rockenheimer!"

"Why—well—yes—but—" Newton stammered, wholly bewildered.

"Quit chewing your words! Go interview Rockenheimer!"

In sheer desperation, Brisco was playing the cub to win without the least hope of his doing so.

Recovering himself, and with an effort to appear nonchalant, Newton said:

"Certainly. Where did you say I would find him?"

"I didn't say. You know as much

about it as I do. Get the interview and," he added with disconcerting positiveness, "I want a good interview."

"What sort?" Newton asked boldly.

"What sort of a blankety-blank interview do I always want? Details, details, details—everything! Never let an interview escape any possible question that can be asked! Drain the victim of answers! Now get out and," he added menacingly, "don't come back here with a smile on your face unless you get it. Understand?"

Brisco never gave Newton a second thought after he was out of sight; he no more expected the interview than he expected to praise everybody on the staff on the morrow—and Gabriel's trump might as well have been anticipated as such an event.

VI.

Newton walked aimlessly down the street.

"Interview Harry Rockenheimer!" he muttered. A wholesome awe for Brisco and Brisco's orders, as well as his peculiar way of doing things, had been instilled into Newton. "Just the same, I think it would have been more decent of him to have had some one else do it. But I suppose it'll have to be done."

More meditation brought out the reflection:

"I wonder if he really knows where Rockenheimer is. It'd be just like him to play a trick like that."

Newton didn't show himself particularly energetic in carrying out his orders. He stood on a corner and scratched his head, then had his shoes shined, smoked a cigarette, visited a saloon, and finally strolled thoughtfully through the lobby of the leading hotel. At last he decided what to do.

"I never put a good story over on this paper—and I'd like to put just one

across. I'll do it, too! It may be my last, but I'll do it—s'help me Billikens!"

He bought a tablet, returned to his room, and sat down, poisoning his pencil for some time before he started. Then he began writing the interview with Harry Rockenheimer.

It was an interview such as Brisco delighted in—only Brisco insisted that at least two persons be present when an interview was taking place. It told everything that there could possibly have been to tell. None too much credit was given young Rockenheimer, who represented that he had broken off negotiations, financial and diplomatic, with his father because the latter wanted him to marry a "snub-nosed nubbin from the cornstalk of European royalty, who had a string of titles longer than the Atlantic cable and harder to pronounce than the roll call of a Japanese regiment."

Newton had a fair command of adjectives and more than a passing acquaintance with slang, and he was not in the least particular about the expressions he put into young Rockenheimer's mouth. In fact, Mr. Rockenheimer went on to say that he did not care what his father thought about the matter, that he was man enough to paddle his own canoe, and that as far as maidens were concerned, if he ever did marry, it would be an American girl. Then, in reply to an inquiry as to what type of girl he thought most lovely, Mr. Rockenheimer proceeded to give an accurate and detailed description of the star woman reporter of the *Morning Mail*.

As a matter of fact, the interview came near complying to the last iota with all the demands that Brisco had imposed. Some details were lacking, of course, but Newton had done his best. It was a long interview, and, if adorned with the hall mark of authenticity, it would have been prized in any

newspaper office between the two oceans.

When he had finished writing, Newton drew a mental picture of himself handing it in. He pictured the manner in which he would shrivel up before the questioning glances and the blasting sarcasm of the volcanic Brisco and decided that it would be best not to run chances. It took more temerity to lay it on Brisco's desk than to write it—notwithstanding the solacing thought that he had for once "put it over on him." He wrote a note, called a messenger, and sent note and interview to the editorial office.

He remembered that it was Belle's evening off, and telephoned to ask her if he could call. He could.

VII.

Brisco glared at the messenger and jerked open the note addressed to him. As he read, his eyes widened and the scowl disappeared. The note said:

MR. BRISCO.

SIR: In accordance with instructions, and thanks to the courtesy of Mr. Rockenheimer, I have secured the interview. He has invited me to spend the evening with him, and not knowing but that I may find something more that will be of advantage to the paper, I have accepted. Respectfully,

CHARLES NEWTON.

"Newton, old boy, my hunch was right when I took you on!" Brisco exclaimed to himself. "It looks like a double in your pay check," and reading almost a page at a glance, he raced through the interview.

But at the end, he delivered himself of a lengthy opinion on the blankety-blank fool who would get an interview of such importance and not give the least clew as to where Rockenheimer was stopping, had stopped, or was to stop.

"Here all the detectives in Christendom are on the search. The *Mail* finds him, and never a mention of

where he is! And the green lunatic wrote it on this atrocious ruled tablet paper and on both sides of each sheet—the blankety-blank cub!”

He called Kenyon.

“Have you any idea where Newton is to be found?”

“No, sir.”

“Well, go find him. He’s got the Rockenheimer interview—he’s with Rockenheimer now. I want to know where Rockenheimer is staying and has been staying. Get it. It’s the biggest story since Noah built the ark. Go find Newton! Don’t stand there listening to me!”

Kenyon went out.

VIII.

“Miss van Buskirk,” Newton asked, when the mother had retired for the evening, “just how serious an offense is faking?”

She looked at him and was surprised to see that he appeared to be in earnest. It was a silly question for a newspaper man to ask.

“I may as well confess,” he went on, noticing the expression on her face, “that I’m only a greenhorn—a cub, as you call it. I never saw the inside of a newspaper office until the day I went to work for the *Mail*. I’ve heard something about faking—its not being right and all that—but just how serious is the offense?”

“Well,” she laughed, “it’s the old story—it all depends on whether or not you are caught.”

“This afternoon I was sent out on an impossible sort of an interview. I sent it into the office and came to see you. I have it figured out that if Brisco thinks it’s a fake, he won’t run it—and if he does print it—well, I don’t know exactly what will happen.”

“A story of any importance?”

“No, I don’t think so—just a little family matter.”

The conversation moved on to other subjects. It turned and wandered and roamed and refused to take the tack that both of them wanted. Not until almost midnight did Newton venture:

“I’ve often wondered—just as a matter of curiosity, you understand—how cheaply two people who really love each other could live—on how small a salary?”

Belle answered:

“I’ve never given the matter serious thought, but from a purely disinterested standpoint I should think”—she did her best to judge what his salary was, so that she might whittle her estimate to fit—“I should think about twenty dollars a week.”

Newton gave a low whistle. Twenty dollars! Two people! He thought of his room, with its mangy curtains and diseased rugs, and said:

“I really don’t think it can be done—comfortably.”

“Of course, you understand,” she hastened to add, “they would have to love each other a great deal.”

And that was as close as they came during the evening to the question of housekeeping on love with a small salary as incidental.

IX.

It was after one o’clock in the morning when Newton, impatient for a copy of his paper to see what had become of the interview—and many were the minutes during which he had debated the wisdom of having sent it in—decided that he would go to “Kelley’s”—a place where a side door was maintained for newspaper men—and try to learn what had happened. A number of the men from the *Mail* were there, but the city edition had not been printed as yet, and he did not feel like talking to them. After a long, long wait, Kenyon came in.

“Where on earth have you been?”

he demanded almost angrily, grasping Newton by the arm. "I've looked high and low for you all over the city. Tell me—tell me— Oh, it's too late now," he added in disgust, "but Brisco was wild to know where you met Rockenheimer. And say, that's some interview! I've just read it—here in the last edition—only you left out the place where he was stopping. Here's the paper."

"Does look pretty good, doesn't it? What the——"

Newton's eyes were wide in amazement, for there, above the featured story on the first page, loomed his name in small, but vividly black letters as the author of the story. He had written a signed article for the *Morning Mail*, and for the first time the magnitude of his interview dawned on him.

"That certainly is hot stuff," Kenyon commented. "And say, where did you meet that fellow, anyway?"

Newton hesitated.

"Come on—tell me. I looked all over for him—was on that story, on and off, for three weeks, trying to get a glimpse of him. You put one over on us, all right. How'd you locate him?"

"I guess this is what you call a fake." Newton spoke as if it were a matter of no importance.

"A what?" Kenyon gasped. "Fake! Do you mean you faked that? Quit your kiddin'! Gee, you gave me a start!"

"I never found anybody. I just wrote it."

"Man, you don't mean to tell me this story is a fake?"

"Call it what you like. I've told you the way it was."

"Lord! Oh, Heaven! Sulphuric flames and high water! When Brisco hears that, he'll blow up and wreck the building!"

"What need is there for him to

know?" Newton asked confidentially. "Can't I put it over on him?"

"Put that over! Oh, you poor chump! Didn't you know Old Man Rockenheimer has been scouring the earth to find that fool son of his——"

"Fool son?" Newton questioned.

"Yes, that damn-fool young Rockenheimer, who's always getting into trouble. Just as soon as the managing editor heard of the interview, he wired Rockenheimer that the *Mail* had found him. Rockenheimer wired back that he would be here to-morrow afternoon. The *Mail* wants you to produce. We don't even know he's in the city."

"If he is, this story ought to bring him out of hiding. Maybe he'll show up. We ought to get some credit for that."

"Credit! We'll get it in the neck from every paper in ten thousand miles for putting such a fake over! Say, you're in bad and I liked you, too! But you'd better hit for the tall timber while the going's good."

"Let's talk it over," Newton suggested.

He showed that he was considerably interested in the matter, and for an hour they sat and planned, discussed and talked, and ever and anon made signs to the sleepy gentleman who, from his perch behind the bar, indulged in profane mental comments on proprietors who violated the law by keeping open all night.

"Man," Kenyon stormed, growing more indignant the longer they talked, "you couldn't have done a worse thing! You've thrown your sheet down—your own paper! I didn't think you'd do such a trick—on the level, I didn't! The only thing on God's green earth left for you to do is to make good or get out. Find Rockenheimer or beat it. You're in bad! In bad—b-a-d!"

"Can't I explain to Brisco? Apologize or something?"

Kenyon flung out his hands in despair.

"Heavens and oceans of sulphur! Can't I make you understand that you've raised hell? There isn't any explanation possible. You've busted the whole decalogue of newspaper commandments——"

"Nix on the Sarah Bernhardt tragedy stuff! You act like I'd killed somebody. I'm going to explain to Brisco this afternoon——"

"You're crazy! Explain! You can't explain! You can't do anything but run!"

"Oh, yes, I can. I can try. He can't kill me, you know."

"You don't know Brisco," Kenyon warned.

X.

The following morning, Belle and her sister were holding a cheery and affectionate conversation in their room.

"Just as a matter of opinion, Nubsey," Belle began cautiously, "on how little do you suppose two people can live—two married people who love each other a great deal—I mean a whole lot?"

Stella, from the pinnacle of her importance as a bride-to-be, considered the matter gravely and then announced:

"I think it all depends on the couple. Now, Jack and I can get along on much less than other people. Why, I'm sure we could live and be almost comfortable on thirty-five dollars a week, and there are few girls who would try it for that."

Belle sighed.

"Why do you ask?"

"Oh, I was just trying to think up some feature stuff for the paper, and it struck me that poverty-stricken newlyweds would be a good subject."

With that, she listlessly turned to her table and began shuffling the cards, while Stella talked volubly on the im-

portant event and the many attendant events that were coming to make her blessed among women.

"How lovely!" she interrupted herself to comment, noticing that the cards were promising a propitious future for Belle. "They are running for you. You always said you were going to marry a rich man—and the cards say the same thing. I wouldn't be surprised if you did. It's certainly remarkable the way the cards run."

"Oh, the cards don't know anything about it!" Belle exclaimed impatiently, as she swept the cards to one side and jumped up. "And I am *not* going to marry a rich man! I wouldn't marry the best rich man on earth. Why, he's only on a cub reporter's salary!"

With that she grabbed her hat and coat and fled, leaving her sister standing like one in a trance, vainly wondering if she had heard aright.

XI.

In the office of the *Morning Mail*, Kenyon was sitting at his desk, watching the door for Newton to enter. When he came in, Kenyon called him to one side.

"The game's up. You'd better duck."

"What's the matter? What's wrong?" Newton asked, puzzled.

"Now I'm giving you friendly advice. I haven't squealed to anybody and won't. But when Brisco finds out, you'll get more than you expect. He's in the managing editor's office now, with Old Man Rockenheimer——"

"Oh, then I'll get to explain to him—to 'Old Man Rockenheimer,' as you call him. I'll simply tell them how it happened, you know."

"On the level, Newton, you're the densest citizen I ever came across! The jig's up. The best thing you can do is to strike for the tall timber."

"You say the old man is in there now. Wonder if they'd let me in."

"Yes, and forty other people."

"Think I'd better go in and tell them all just how it happened—" But that moment he saw Belle enter and pass through the local room, looking neither to the right nor to the left as usual, to the little office that she shared with the society editor. "Excuse me, Kenyon," he apologized, "but I have to go and make an important engagement for myself."

With that he left.

Belle was alone. Her back was turned to the door and she had spread out a copy of the paper. Her heart beat triumphantly as she saw the signed interview. She felt far more happy than had it been her own story. Suddenly she became weak, almost sick, as she recalled what Newton had said about faking an interview the night before.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, seeing that he was beside her.

He bowed slightly and colored deeply.

"You faked that!"

"Listen, please listen, Miss van Buskirk! Don't start blaming me. Kenyon's been up in the air all night. I'm in a hurry now and time is precious and"—he was trying to screw up his courage to the sticking point—"and I want to talk to you seriously for about three minutes—real seriously."

She cleared her throat and told him to go ahead.

"Listen, Miss—I mean—Belle—I want you—I mean— You know what I mean." But her eyes were downcast and there was no sign to show that she did, so he continued desperately: "I am in love—with you. I want you—I wanted to tell you before—but—you know. I'm not going to ask you to marry me now, but please won't you promise that when I get comfortably fixed you will? It won't

take long—I don't think it will. I'll make good for you. I don't know what's coming during the next few hours—and I don't care. We haven't known each other long, but if I make good for you—if I make good, won't you marry me?"

Let it be emphatically understood that Belle did not say anything about it being "so sudden." It was much slower than she had wished for. But she thought hard for a moment. This thing of giving oneself away is a desperate hazard for any but more or less professional summer girls.

"Please; please promise me, Belle dear!" he pleaded. "I love you." He was reaching for her hand when there burst on his ears the stentorian voice of Brisco, shouting in the local room:

"Tell Newton to come here."

Almost instantly Kenyon appeared in the doorway.

"Brisco wants you," he announced simply, not comprehending the significance of the situation.

"Will you?" persisted Newton, lowering his voice. "Tell me. I have to go now—and if you don't want me, I won't come back. Please tell me."

Belle, with her head bowed low, looked up at him and with her lips formed the word "Yes." Newton turned to the doorway with a new-born authority, and said to Kenyon:

"Tell Brisco I'll be out there in a minute."

Kenyon turned, and, perhaps he imagined it, but it seemed that no sooner had he done so than he heard a suspicious smack.

The minute passed and more. Brisco thundered again and Kenyon reappeared. This time there was no mistaking the situation, and he coughed vigorously to attract attention. Belle and Newton separated guiltily.

"Excuse me," Kenyon began, "but Brisco's out here doin' a turkey trot and he wants you right away."

Newton, giving Belle's hand a parting and tender squeeze, assumed as nonchalant an air as possible and approached the storming Brisco.

"Where's Rockenheimer?" the city editor demanded explosively.

"How do I know? I was with him last night, but now— There's no telling where he is by this time."

Kenyon, who heard this, dropped his lower jaw in amazement.

"Where'd you meet him? Where? Can't you talk, you damn' fool?"

"Oh, we've met several times. You know, he was a college chum of mine."

Brisco unlimbered a large collection of blankety blanks.

"Bring him right in here, Mr. Brisco," called the managing editor, who, with Rockenheimer, senior, in his office, did not feel undignified in doing the work of an office boy and had come to the doorway after Newton.

"Go on and tell him the truth, Kenyon," Newton said, turning to his astonished friend. "You can do it better than I." Then, to Brisco, "Kenyon knows all about it. He's really responsible for the story, in a way. He helped me out."

"That's a lie!" Kenyon stormed. "The story's a fake!"

"What?" Brisco roared.

Wow—oh—wow, but the way that man did swear! He unburdened his soul, and a most profane soul it was. And Kenyon chimed in between oaths with a stormy denial of any complicity, damning Newton for a liar and an ingrate.

"Come on, right in here, right here," the managing editor said to Newton, for he had been too busy watching Rockenheimer, senior, on the other side of the door to catch the drift of the conversation.

While Brisco stood on one foot and swore, and then on the other foot and

did likewise, and frantically waved his arms, no matter which foot he stood on, and while Kenyon was protesting and denying, and Belle, in breathless alarm, was watching them from the door of her room, Newton walked toward the managing editor and was ushered into the presence of the great Rockenheimer.

For a moment the two looked at each other. Then the old man started forward to grasp the reporter affectionately, exclaiming:

"Why, Harry! My boy!"

The managing editor wilted and leaned against the wall. Brisco gasped.

"Harry," the old man asked quietly, almost tenderly, "why did you talk so foolishly to that reporter?"

Thereupon came quickly a full confession:

"I've always wanted to be a reporter. They're the only people that have you bluffed and I wondered how it would feel. And when he told me to get that interview, I nearly tumbled over in surprise. I wasn't sure that he didn't know who I was. Brisco's such a queer fellow, I thought it would be just about like him to play some such trick. But I thought it a good time to have myself interviewed."

"All right. It's all right, my boy. Now of course I want to meet the young lady you described so well this morning."

"Certainly. Right this way, father."

And the man of whom it was said that he owned half the earth and was trying to put a fence around it looked long and tenderly into the brown eyes of the blushing, confused girl. None ever knew what he thought, for he was a man of deep silences, but when he took her hand between his own, he held it for some moments and there was moisture in his eyes.

"Love," he said, "is all that's worth while, after all."



The Man Who Broke the Rule

By May Edginton

Author of "The Woman Who Broke the Rule,"
"He That Is Without Sin," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

Lance Harrison, a young soldier of fortune, finds himself stranded in a London hotel without money to pay his bill. He proposes to the management that he shall discharge his obligation by playing the violin for the entertainment of guests during meals, and his gay audacity and charm win him the engagement. In the course of his new duties, he attracts the attention of a rich elderly widow, Maude Iron, who proceeds to fall violently in love with him. Lance, half amused and half disgusted by the situation, is nevertheless tempted by the woman's huge fortune, and when she proposes marriage, he light-heartedly accepts, without in the least realizing what he is doing. The honeymoon is hardly begun before Lance is bored and weary, but for all his youth and irresponsibility, he is at bottom honest and kind and he determines to live up to his bargain. Then, one day in the hotel dining room, he sees the girl of his dreams, young, fresh, beautiful. Their eyes meet, and it is a case of love at first sight on both sides. Twice, without the knowledge of his wife or of the girl's parents, Lance manages to meet the girl, Dorice Waymore, on the bathing beach. She thinks that Maude is his mother, and he does not undeceive her. Then Maude, jealous and watchful, begins to suspect his interest in Dorice, and insists upon leaving the place at once. Lance has no chance even to say good-by to Dorice, but he leaves a note in which he tells her that he loves her, but has no right to try to win her love—he cannot explain why. Maude takes her husband to her home—Ironsides—and then begins a quiet, monotonous life that drives the young man frantic. In a burst of rebellion, he announces that he is going up to London—alone. Maude consents only after a terrible scene, and the next day she is stricken with paralysis. For months she lingers on, scarcely leaving Lance out of her sight. His only comfort is in the sympathy of her nurse, Dorothy Reay, who deliberately sets out to win him. With his heart full of Dorice, he cares nothing for Dorothy, but he is led into a mild flirtation. Maude's jealous suspicions suddenly flame up again, bringing on a second and fatal stroke. But as she lies dying, alone in the room with the nurse, she insists upon making a second will, leaving Lance nothing in case he marries again. The nurse is forced to witness it, but before a second witness can be called, death intervenes. The nurse conceals this will, and by an earlier will Lance inherits all Maude's money unconditionally. Shortly afterward, he goes up to London, to find Dorice. Dorothy is at work in a hospital there, and at her instigation, Lance asks her to dinner.

CHAPTER XII.

HARRISON had never seen Dorothy Reay in a low-cut frock, with her head bare of white cap or staid bonnet. She was so tall and well built, so smartly coiffured, and so ruddily fresh of complexion, that a man would almost have said, on seeing her, "What a magnifi-

cent woman!" He would have stopped just short of saying it, though, because she stopped decidedly short of magnificence; she was of too ordinary a type, too common a clay, for such a word, in spite of her cleverness. Yet many male heads turned to glance speculatively after her as she entered the restaurant.

"Well," she began, as she unfolded her napkin with a movement of her strong hands that Harrison found he remembered very well, "what a long while it has been! How long have you been in London?"

Harrison did not tell her that he had come up shortly after the funeral, but replied vaguely:

"Oh, a little while."

"I've been thinking about you," said Dorothy, looking down at her folded hands, which rested on the table edge.

"Oh, the devil!" Harrison thought. He knew she meant, "I have remembered a kiss," and he was almost annoyed. He had considered her too wise, too worldly, to overrate so slight an episode. Smiling, he replied:

"Oh, how kind of you! But why?"

"Haven't you thought of me at all, then?" she asked.

He remembered those curious letters, sent on to him from Ironsides, whither they had been addressed, and he answered:

"Very often. And you've been kind enough to write to me."

"And you never wrote back!"

Harrison played a sure, safe card.

"I knew you would understand," he said.

When *hors d'œuvres* came, she helped herself so liberally as to remind him that she was unaccustomed to dining out and was making the most of it. But her open enjoyment of the meal reminded him also of Maude's appetite, and he looked for the first faint sign of a double chin in Dorothy—and found it.

However, she was handsome and lively, a splendid dinner companion; and, finding it the kind of conversation she liked, he made easy love to her all the time. She took an intimate, gentle, resolute interest in his affairs, and would know all.

Was he selling Ironsides?

Was he settling in town for a while?

Was he keeping on the servants?

He was thinking of knocking round the world for a bit?

The nurse's mouth set, and her eyes hardened. They roved over the restaurant while she thought and schemed, and they rested on another pair of eyes, which, for their part, rested on her. A thin woman of forty-five or thereabouts, with an aquiline face, was looking over Dorothy Reay critically, making a swift, polite, but vigorous summary. The thin woman was not alone; her husband sat opposite to her, and between them, one on either side, were a little mouse-colored, beautifully frocked girl and a vapid young man. The nurse inventoried the party immediately.

"There are some friends of yours," she said to Harrison. "They're looking this way as if they know you." She asked in the tone of a woman with every right to be informed, "Who are they?"

He looked and bowed, receiving in return a gracious nod from the thin woman.

"Lady Albright," he replied.

"And Miss Albright?"

"I don't know the girl."

"Then don't look at her," said Dorothy petulantly.

"Dorothy," said Harrison, with a curl of his lip, "there is a certain state, the most blessed of all states, which I am enjoying now."

"You mean?" she asked guardedly.

"Liberty. I'm my own master, Dorothy dear."

The nurse smiled; and the smile was full of a delicious significance, if chastened, as that of a woman who has bought knowledge of values dearly.

"You're funny, Lance." For the first time she used his Christian name. "But you're sad. You have all the wrong ideas."

"Have I?" Harrison replied, curling his lip.

"Marriage—real marriage—isn't slavery. It's complete liberty, since all judgments rest in the hands of one person—who never judges."

"How clever you are!" he mocked.

"I'm not clever. I've only told you what every woman with a heart can tell you."

"But if I never expect to make the real marriage?"

"Why not," asked the nurse softly, "if you can?"

"I can't. That's the point."

"Yes, yes, you can," she murmured, looking down at her pale, ringless hands.

"It's a subject, my dear," said he, "that I do not in the least want to discuss. To be free is quite enough for me, for the present."

After a pause, during which the subject dropped between them, and soft music played its passing, she said suddenly:

"It means so much to a girl to have a friend like you, Lance."

"I'm so glad."

"Some one—some man—to whom she can talk. A girl can trust so few men. It's dreadful to be a woman."

"It's usually jolly soft."

"You boy!" she sighed laughingly. "You boy!"

And then, with a seriousness that in an older woman might have touched the maudlin, but in a young one was merely rather overdone intensity:

"It isn't soft for girls like me. A man like you—a straight man, Lance—can't guess what temptations are offered to women—straight women—like me. Life is terribly hard, Lance."

Harrison listened to a little diatribe that he seemed to know very well.

"All the same pattern," he said to himself resignedly; "just the same dear story."

But, liking Dorothy, he listened with sympathy; and she was so good look-

ing that, anyway, it was charming to watch the play of her lips and eye.

But presently she had talked so long that she began to bore him; frankly, he was not out to be bored, and, he told himself, she ought to know it. So, at a convenient pause, he cut in with:

"So you call me a 'straight' man, Dorothy?"

"I know it."

"But I was an adventurer, living on my wits."

"But living straight," she said softly.

"I married a rich woman, old enough to be my mother, for her money."

"Do you think I can't understand how it all came about?"

"I sold myself for cash just as any poor girl, you say, is tempted to do."

"Oh—it's different."

"How kind you women are!" he cried sarcastically.

"But it *was* different."

"The girl who breaks the rule is down and out; the man who breaks it may get up and go in again. Is that it?"

"You're being very hard on yourself."

"Well," he said, laughing, "it's a certainty that few others will be hard on me. I'm too beastly rich. You've talked to me very frankly, my dear girl, and now I'll talk to you. Do you know, I've had a series of surprises since I came up to town? The surprises being the different ways women make for me because of my money. Mothers of daughters accept me without question, because of my money. Fathers put me up for clubs, because of my money. Girls of good birth and standing and education, and pure as snow, I may take about, because of my money. I might marry to-morrow because of it." He looked across at the Albright party, and added: "I could probably marry that little mouse over there, just out of the schoolroom,

and no one would ask inconvenient questions. We should have a great white wedding with favors and bridesmaids, and the bride's parents would send the bride away with me without a thought."

Dorothy had darted a glance at the mouse-colored girl with a flame in her eyes.

"Don't make a second mistake, Lance," she said, in a voice that she succeeded in keeping clear.

"Take it from me," said the young man, "I shan't."

She continued, and her voice shook in spite of its effort at confidence:

"You will never marry that type of girl, Lance. She isn't your kind. Is she? Do you think she is? Tell me."

"Dorothy," he said scornfully, not replying to the question, "perhaps even you would marry me?"

Dorothy Reay retained sense and dignity enough not to throw everything to the winds in eager assent. Drooping her eyes, she answered:

"Don't jest, Lance. For my sake don't jest."

That was as near as she dared.

"Very well," said he. "We'll talk seriously."

But they talked little during the remainder of the dinner, and she made the silences very significant. They reeked of drama, and they disturbed him.

At ten she must be within the hospital again, and he drove her there in his car. They could sit well back in the recesses of it, and he put an arm round her, amused at seeing in her face the calculation, "Shall I let him?" But she suffered it easily—nay, invited it; and as the car slackened near the hospital gates, she turned her mouth to him for good-by, and once more he was kissing her with a feeling that he had better not.

"Good night," she whispered, her hair against his cheek.

"Good night, dear girl. It's been delightful to see you."

"When shall we meet again, I wonder."

"Soon, I hope." He opened the car door.

"I get half a day once a month."

"We must fix one up. You'd like to motor, perhaps."

"I shall adore it."

"Then you must certainly have what you adore. I'll write, if I may. My engagements—— Good night."

When she had hurried in, looking very tall and big in her white cloak, he was relieved to drive back without her. The theater world had not yet turned out, and the traffic was leisurely. They made good pace back to Jermyn Street, and his man was ready for him with supper in a chafing dish if he wished it. He did not wish it. The woman had, for obscure reasons, made him think of Dorice. If only she had been with him at Prince's! If only it had been her hair soft against his face! But Dorice and light, inconsequent joys were as far apart as the poles. She was a queen to be won humbly, if, when sought the world over, she were to be found.

The young man gave himself up to a mood of despair, from which, by and by, the telephone bell in the hall aroused him.

His man came in to announce that Lady Albright wished to speak to Mr. Harrison. So he went out and heard:

"Is that Mr. Harrison? How are you? We saw you this evening, did we not? My little niece was with me. Will you come in for a rubber of bridge, very quietly, to-morrow afternoon at three? Do come. You will? So kind of you. Good night."

Harrison hung up the receiver, marveling at himself. Afternoon tea and bridge! Polite powwow! He thought to himself:

"How a man can sink!"

But the day had to be filled, and what else should an idler do, better, from three till five?

He might have been swimming out of a blue bay into the open sea toward the infinite horizon, with the queen of the earth beside him. Behind, the world's eyes look from windows; the cliffs and pines stand wondering up against the sheer sky; the water makes music, a smooth and rippling tune. There are youth and love, days and nights that need not yet be counted; and youth and love are strong and swift, the tide on the flow.

"Oh, Dorice!" the boy breathed.

He strode to his window, pulled aside the curtains, flung the window up, and leaned out. So many passed up and down the street! In all those throngs, could he not find her, delicate and dainty, fur-wrapped, driving back from a theater, perhaps, with those blind and placid parents of hers, the light of car or street lamp showing to the lover her face?

"Oh, Dorice, aren't you anywhere?"

But they all passed by.

CHAPTER XIII.

Lady Albright was alone in her South Molton Street drawing-room when Lance Harrison called at three the following afternoon. A table was placed for bridge, certainly, but the other players had not appeared. The lady herself was at her most motherly, with that peculiarly ardent motherliness of the thin woman, so distinct from the placid motherliness of the fat one. She wore a pretty, elderly toilet, and everything she said and did seemed right, and she was perfectly charming. Before the young man had been with her five minutes, she was inquiring with particularity into the identity of his companion on the previous evening at Prince's; and yet, so maternal and well-mannered was the interlocutor,

that her inquisition did not in the least offend. Contrarily, it petted and flattered, although her smooth purpose was plain at once to his ironic experience. He was—and one should remember that never since his wife's death had he been allowed to forget it—a *parti*, and Lady Albright had an orphan niece.

The lady's purring questions, it appeared, had their roots in kind alarm and disapproval. Dorothy Reay's proprietary air had been too marked for the onlooker to miss, and her ladyship had summed up the nurse and placed her instantly in the right category. When she had ascertained Miss Reay's position in life and the fragility of any claim she had upon the rich young man's friendship, Lady Albright could smile. But she said, too, with delightful menace that could still fascinate, because in her youth she had been a great coquette:

"I shall have to take you in hand, Mr. Harrison. Now, would you like me to take you in hand?"

He could but give a laughing "Yes," and the lady proceeded:

"I promise you it will be very nice. How old are you?"

"Nearly twenty-five."

"Good gracious, how young he is!" said the lady, but she looked carefully at his fresh face and his dare-devil eyes, and knew him to be tough.

"You need some nice old woman like me to keep you out of snares, Mr. Lance. And if you'll just trust yourself to me, I'm a splendid pilot. I have a son"—whom she had not allotted to the impecunious niece—"about your age. You must meet him. I intend him to marry early and settle down, and go into Parliament, you know."

"Oh, my God, how awful!" said Lance Harrison.

Lady Albright was not piqued, but amused.

"Yes," she said confidentially, "but if you had lived as long as I have, Mr. Lance, you would have seen so many men settling down, marrying the right women, young, and going into Parliament, and being so glad about it afterward—when they'd reached my age, too—that you'd see it is the very best thing for them. After all, what else is there to do?"

"What isn't there to do?" cried the young man.

"Well, tell me," said Lady Albright indulgently.

He told her.

"There's trekking along where no roads are, with only one shirt to your back, ready to fight or love any man you meet, with only one gun between you and starvation and a whole great world you've never dreamed of to be free in. There's coming out of the wild into a town and getting lovely drunk, and going back again. There's forests and rivers and sunsets, such as you never get here at home in the garden. There's such variety. You don't marry one woman; you love all women. There aren't any laws in the world worth living in; and if there were, you wouldn't go into Parliament and make more—you'd just break 'em."

"Good gracious, you savage man!" said the lady. Then she became grave and beautifully maternal, while all her social wisdom came to help her. "You're young," she said, "and you don't know the value of things. You've never been really happy, have you? Now tell me truly."

"Very well, I will. I've been gorgeously happy. I've been as happy as a wild beast."

"Oh!" said Lady Albright.

"I won't deny you altogether. You're a dear, and some of what you say's right. If a man marries the right woman, then he doesn't want much else, very badly. But how does he find her?"

"You're going to find her," said Lady Albright, with a little smile.

"And supposing she's too good for me? That I'm not worthy?"

"Oh— Oh, well, my dear boy, your modesty—"

"I may have done—I have done—some fairly rotten things."

"Every one of sense knows that a young man must sow—"

"There are oats and oats—black oats and white oats."

"Any girl who loved you would forgive you anything in the past."

"Would she? Perhaps her parents wouldn't be satisfied with the results of inquiries."

"Sensible parents—"

"Wouldn't inquire?"

"How you take me up!" said Lady Albright, with temper gracefully assumed. "You're a very naughty boy and make my flesh creep. All nice young men have a past full of little peccadillos. No one bothers about that. When you're twenty-five and beginning to think seriously, you turn your back on the past. One simply hasn't time to remember everything in this short life. There's *such* a future before a clever young man!"

"Perhaps I know something about marriage already. You know I've been married."

"I knew your former wife slightly, my dear boy—yes. I suppose a few people knew. But, really, your life together was so short—"

"I suppose any one who does know knows that I married her for her money."

"Oh, really, I don't think people are so unkind as to speculate."

"You're all so awfully kind," he said, with so crude a stare that she fidgeted.

"I'm sure every one wants to be. Personally, I think—since you speak of your—er—affair—that poor Mrs. Iron was a little to blame—"

"She had a very generous heart,"

said Lance brusquely. "She wished to help me."

After a while Lady Albright murmured something about it all being very sad. She had nearly satisfied herself as to Dorothy Reay.

The door opened, and a girl came in, the mouse girl of the restaurant. She was little and shy and young, and she looked all softness in a mousy little velvet gown. But she displayed already great temper and domination in her thin-lipped mouth. She would, some day, drive a husband into Parliament and the limelight.

"My niece Stelle," said Lady Albright. "She's not really out yet. I'm presenting her next season. My dear child, this is Mr. Lance Harrison—Miss Gatherby."

Stelle Gatherby had a voice that matched her looks for softness. She sat down, and her movements were very graceful.

"Shall we play bridge, aunt?"

"When Mr. Hansom comes, darling. You must meet my godson, Freddy Hansom," she said to Harrison. "He was dining with us last night."

Lance remembered the vapid youth at Prince's.

He thought, "He would do admirably to settle down with this Stelle and be respectable."

But she was thinking otherwise, looking at the big young man before her with the admiration of all very little women for very large men. She smiled at him, and her thin-lipped smile was extremely sweet. When tea came, shortly after, she poured it out. In the domestic occupation she looked her best.

The young man named Hansom came in soon, and was affable to Lance. He had heard that the fellow had pots of money, through marrying a rich old woman and cleverly startling her into dying soon afterward, and Hansom himself had none. He sup-

posed, too, that this fellow was marked down for Stelle.

He played, therefore, into his godmother's hand—for she had always been good to him—while they all drank tea, by monopolizing her attention with a long story. So Lance was left with the little girl Stelle, watching the movements of her remarkably tiny hands among the cups, rendering her little services, and persuading her to laugh often, on the discovery that she possessed the dearest, tiniest teeth. Had it not been for her shrew's mouth, which he had noted at once, she would have had a very whole admiration from him.

Her talk was little, like her person—never ceasing, but little; yet the voice was so soft, so babyishly faint, that the words seemed the only words suitable for it to utter. She had but recently left a finishing school on the Continent, and she must tell him all about it—about her tiny adventures, and tiny amours there, little tales of a schoolgirl's life which her mind had not yet grown out of, though her heart and senses had swept on. He listened, laughing at her tame delights. There was the story of a youngish professor of Italian:

"So we got into a fearful row. There were six of us, and we all sent him notes, signed with the wrong initials, promising to meet him. And the mistress on duty that afternoon said— And my great friend, the girl I told you about, Dorice, said—"

He shook and flushed, and she stopped.

"Doris," he said calmly. "What a pretty name it is! D-o-r-i-s, I suppose?"

"D-o-r-i-c-e. Dorice Waymore. Isn't it a pretty name? And she's a darling," Stelle gushed. "She's several years older than I, and she left two years ago, but we still write to each other."

"How faithful girls are!" stammered Harrison absently.

Oh, the sunset evening sea, and the sunlight morning sea, and man and maid swimming together into infinity, with the world left behind!

"You must meet her," said Stelle. "She's coming to stay with Aunt Marian."

"To stay—with your aunt?"

"To-morrow."

"Here—in town?"

"Yes, here. I live with Aunt Marian, don't you know?"

"What a time you and Miss Dorice will have!" said Harrison stealthily, with no control over the thick beating of his heart.

"I'm longing to see her!" cried little Stelle, still schoolgirlish.

"I must come and take you both everywhere, if Lady Albright will trust me."

Stelle stole a glance at her aunt, and young as the girl was, fresh from her school, she knew by instinct what lay in that kindly, scheming heart. If all went as Lady Albright had visioned, the mouse girl might be presented in June upon her marriage—"Lady Albright presented her niece, Mrs. Lance Harrison, one of the newest brides." Then the girl's glance flew back to the young man. He was looking at her, rapt; she was the almost heavenly medium between himself and Dorice. And Stelle blushed over her little pale mouse face, and thought, "He admires me very much;" for in spite of her shrew's mouth, her shrewishness was immature. Her heart and senses had long outpaced her mind, and she was all ripe for the great romance.

It was almost upon Harrison's lips to ask, "Where is Miss Waymore now?"—"Where is my Dorice? Where is my love?"—"For I think I once met her and I should like to write to her." Almost, but not quite, for seeing little Stelle's flush and read-

ing, with the ruthless penetration of disillusioned youth, Lady Albright's soul, he checked himself. Imagining his question, he could see the sudden change on the mouse girl's face, her eyes of inquiry, her quick, frozen "I am not quite sure of her address. She has changed it." Would she have said that?

One must remember that this young man had an experience of women large for his years; that he had seen many jealous acts played; that his poor Maude had taught him many moves of prudence in the subtle game. Perhaps an exhibition of eagerness on his part would cool the schoolgirl friendship and postpone interminably that angel's visit for which, since a moment ago, his whole soul and body lived.

Then he thought, too, of surprising Dorice deliciously; of walking into this very room as the tea table was brought in, finding the mouse girl over the tea-cups, and Dorice— What would she be doing?

Their eyes would meet, as across that honeymoon hotel dining room; they would meet and fuse. They would say—any nonsense. But the next morning, very early, they could meet again in the park, with no one, nothing, between. After, the world would be theirs.

Did she ride? Just how would she look in the park? So immersed he became in his mazy speculations that at last he caught Stelle watching him, puzzled, aggrieved. She half suspected that she had bored him.

He leaned to her over the tea table, which was between them. He smiled.

"When," he murmured, "can I come and take you girls out to lunch? Will Lady Albright mind?"

Stelle answered:

"Aunt Marian won't mind my going a bit, since Dorice will be there. You know, Mr. Harrison, I'm not out yet. But Dorice is much older than I."

"She's not a mouse girl, after all," said the boy to himself, laughing. "She's just a gooseberry, a little green gooseberry, only she doesn't know it."

But he was very grateful to her. Still leaning to her, he said half jocosely, half tenderly:

"I wish it were your birthday."

"Oh, why?"

"I've never seen such hands as yours, and I'm allowed to give you gloves."

Again the schoolgirl blushed.

"What are you two talking of?" said Lady Albright, who had not been unwatchful. "And shall we play bridge?"

They moved obediently to the bridge table, and Lady Albright and her nephew partnered against Stelle Gatherby and Harrison.

"I'm asking," said Harrison, in the idle pause before play began, "if I can take Miss Gatherby and her old school friend out to lunch some day?"

Lady Albright gave assent, and gratefully he lost ten pounds to her within the hour.

He gave the tepid Hansom a lift home in his Daimler, and Hansom was his friend. But he did not ask him to stay and dine in Jermyn Street, although the invitation would have been accepted gladly, for he wanted, above all things, to be alone.

Yet he was not alone; Dorice was there. He played, with joyous absurdity, at entertaining such divine company. He ordered a second cover to be laid, as if expecting a guest in the flesh, and dispensed with service unless rung for. Then he talked to her quietly, telling her all the events that bridged that tremendous gap of ten months' time between them. She was very sympathetic. She interested herself in him, although yet too shy for premature words of love. He played at a beautiful restraint. Then she asked, after inquiring of his own fortunes:

"And your mother?"

Harrison went very soberly to bed.

CHAPTER XIV.

All through that spring night the young man's ecstasy of expectation would not allow him to sleep. And yet the night did not linger upon its passage. It passed, to joyous waking dreams, almost as quickly as it might have done in joyous sleeping dreams. So, when the fairest of dawns came, it found him ready, like a happy bridegroom, for a day that was to him as a wedding day. It was the morning that was long. The morning, with its hard waiting, when the birds sang in the parks, the small breezes blew in the white and sunny streets, and the whole face of the heavens smiled, was nearly too much. He almost went, unbidden, to lunch in South Molton Street, but restrained himself till nearer the hour of teacups. He guessed rightly that, since Dorice was to arrive that day, he would find both girls chattering together at home, and he was right.

Stelle's aunt was out.

Harrison asked, therefore, for Miss Gatherby, and was taken up to the girl's own sitting room, bright with chintz and flowers, peevish with her little white lap dogs that complained fretfully from their silk-soft baskets. Stelle's tiny hands, as yesterday, were busy with the function of tea pouring. But there against the window, in the sunlight as he remembered her, with blue sky instead of blue sea backing her golden hair, idle, beautiful, was Dorice.

While little Stelle jumped up, exclaiming in her frail baby voice: "Oh, Mr. Harrison! How nice to have you all to ourselves!" their eyes met over her head, Dorice's dark ones darkening more, dilating and shimmering, while Harrison's eyes were steady with

the bright steadiness of the lover pursuing his immemorial purpose. Stelle saw the look, and had she wondered, would have been baffled, lacking experience as yet, by its quiet. But she did not wonder. She followed it, exclaiming with glee:

"Yes, that's Dorice, whom I told you about—my dearest friend. Miss Waymore, Mr. Harrison."

He moved forward with a great longing to touch her hand, and she offered it. He remembered that he had never till now held her hand, or looked, except by those wonderful surreptitious chances, into her eyes. So now he held it beyond the conventional moment. He looked at her, dazzled, like a man looking into the sun. He could not trust his voice, but just smiled faintly. And she smiled, and, with the better dissimulation of woman, said something or other of light moment. The message flashed from each to each that it was well to preserve a mutual silence as to former meetings; there are, after all, secrets too dear to be told.

All this while—but it was only a few seconds—Stelle saw nothing. She turned again to the tea table to minister to Harrison, and he sat down in the window with Dorice.

"You remember your promise?" he said to Stelle, when she gave him his cup.

She pretended to forget, but she had not forgotten. She had dreamed of him. And the evening before Lady Albright had told the penniless niece that the young man was an eligible of eligibles; and Stelle's world revolved, at the moment, to the tune of the chink of money as well as the singing voice of Love, for, after all, the little girl knew herself to be precariously situated, depending pitifully upon the god of woman's chances.

"You promised to lunch," said Harrison. "Will you lunch to-morrow? And where?"

"May Dorice come?"

The situation was to both of them deliciously absurd when he turned to ask with polite *empressment*: "Will you come, Miss Waymore?" and she replied: "I'd love it, thanks."

"You're a dear," said Stelle. "You see, if you didn't come, auntie wouldn't let me. You see, you're older than I."

"Where shall it be?" asked Harrison.

The talk turned then to a discussion of restaurants, and it turned Harrison to his recently brand-new pastime of thinking, though he managed to join in the nonsense of the girls. What bubble and froth life was—this life! All restaurant meals, much spending, luxurious motoring, the best clothes, laughter—often empty—and the continuous game of words! But, all the same, he thrilled to see Dorice joining hands with it. And she was as lovely in her town frock and hat as she had been in her bathing dress. Yet, so anomalous are clothes, she was more dangerous to peace now, more desirable, even—now that she looked as if she had left sea and sun and air for a while behind and had banded herself with the sirens of town.

He stayed by her, to get intoxicated with this new atmosphere of hers. But Stelle stayed, too, and all the afternoon he could get no chance of asking Dorice if she walked or rode in the park of mornings, and if he might join her. In spite of the girls' arrangement to lunch with him at the Carlton the next day, he left reluctantly, with this question unasked.

He went into the park very early the next morning on the chance of seeing his lady. During the night, he had decided that it was a good chance, because the open-air girl would get up early, unlike the lazy little Stelle, and would want her exercise daily. Whether she would walk or ride he could not

decide, so he rode, because if she came on horseback, they could canter up and down the Row together, and if she came on foot, he would dismount and walk beside her. That was easy. He took up his station opposite the gate that she would reach soonest from South Molton Street, and from eight o'clock he waited there, reining in an impatient horse. To reward his hope and patience, at half past eight she came, workmanlike and trim, walking briskly.

He was off his horse in a moment, watching her approach through the gates, thinking how light her feet were, how beautiful and dancing her gait, and how splendidly she held her slim shoulders and her head. How lovely she was altogether! How soon would she see him?

She saw him before she reached the park, and she blushed, and her feet trod lighter than ever. Having that better dissimulation of women, she could control the facial expression of her thoughts, but they ran much like this:

"How fine he looks! He's so brown and clean! He's so big and straight! He looks better than all in riding things! Is he waiting for me?"

But when she arrived at the gate, she exclaimed in a surprised tone:

"Oh, good morning!"

"I'm waiting for you," said the young man humbly.

"For me?"

"I guessed you would come."

"How did you guess that?"

"You like open air, don't you? You would be sure to walk or ride every morning."

"Y-y-yes. I—I do."

"So I came."

"You really mustn't stop your ride to stand and talk to me."

"I got off to walk with you, if I may."

Leading his horse, he turned beside

Dorice, looking at her with that steady brightness in his eyes which, by its sheer purpose, half terrified and half delighted. She had the beautiful feeling that a woman knows of being in the only trap in which she would care to spend the rest of her life, yet with the spring still unclosed, so that she might, as yet, fly away if she chose. She fluttered farther in, therefore, that bright morning, walking beside Harrison and a sulky horse in the park.

"I spoil your ride," she said, but she knew gladly that she lied.

"You began to spoil my life," he answered.

"How unjust!" she murmured, trying to fence.

"But very true," said Harrison softly. "But now we've met again, and there's so much to tell. You begin."

"How shall I begin?"

"Tell me all you've been doing, whom you've been seeing, when you left that hotel where I met you, and where you've been since you left it. And have you been happy, Dorice?"

"Oh, we hardly know each other," she murmured.

"Yes, we do," said Harrison.

Dorice knew, so she did not dispute him. She began her recital at once to cover her shyness.

"We've just been wandering about. After that autumn—last autumn—we went to Cannes, and then to Monte Carlo for the winter. I'm going to stay with Lady Albright for a while and go about with her. Mother and father are coming up for a month at the end of June, and then I shall go to them. In August father usually goes somewhere for the grouse—wherever he's asked. We are always invited to a round of houses for the shooting. Those are the only sorts of plans we make—all we do. I suppose you do the same, though somehow you don't look like it."

"I suppose," he agreed, "that I shall do the same."

"Women are so idle," said Dorice, "but a man need never be idle."

"What can he do, if he does nothing?"

"He can go into Parliament."

"So he can," said Harrison humbly. It seemed gloriously fitting, as suggested by Dorice, and he had forgotten all about Lady Albright's similar views for him. "Dorice," he said, "look! I will give you my life. Here it is. Doesn't a woman think it rather sport to play with lives? Wouldn't that fill in an idle lady's time rather nicely? What will you do with me, Dorice?"

"Oh, don't!" she cried hurriedly. "You must draw your own map yourself."

"Why don't you do it?"

"I have my own map to do."

"Yours is all drawn for you," said the young man, looking at her with that purpose which she found so enjoyably terrible.

Dorice murmured her dissent and walked on more quickly. He kept pace, with the fretting horse, watching the morning light fall between green boughs on her face and the dancing steps of her feet and her whole adorable motion, buoyant as a ship's on an even sea. She wore a straight, plain white hat, cocked a little to one side, and beneath it her gold hair lay like folded strands of silk, skein upon skein. She was more delightful, even, than he had remembered her, coming slim and drenched out of the waves. The park was quiet and green and dewy as country fields.

"Will you do this every morning, Dorice?" he asked by and by.

"I may," said Dorice.

"Please promise."

"No," she said with timid perversity, "I won't promise. But no doubt I shall do it."

"I'm taking you and Miss Gatherby

out to lunch to-day. I shall see you again. And then again to-morrow morning—and when again?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Dorice.

"All right," he replied. "I'll take my chances—and make them."

Dorice was filled with tremulous delight at hearing his resolve; she despised herself for such delight, but could not help it. She trusted him implicitly to make and take those heavenly chances for himself; otherwise, woman-like, she, dissembling, would have helped him.

She smiled, and let her silent smile say more for her than many words would have done; but she would not reply in words to his perseverance, and thus she absolved to herself the significance of the smile.

He laughed.

"It's a good old world, isn't it, Dorice?"

"Of course," she replied fervently.

"Yes," he said, "I dare say it always has been good, of course, to you."

"To you, too?"

"In a different manner," said Harrison dryly.

"A man's good time," said Dorice with sagacity, "is always different from a woman's."

"Not his real good time."

"What is his real good time?"

"The one woman forever more—all his own—and then nothing else matters. And she can drive him," vowed the lover like a lover, "where and how she likes."

"Oh!" Dorice murmured.

The young man was thinking. For the first time in his life, he must begin to look with respect upon laws, with honor upon conventions; to go softly and speak thoughtfully and behave as social systems laid down. It behooved him to do his duty and be careless no more.

"Dorice, did you say your people came to town at the end of June?"

Dorice was glad, in her joyous fright, to seize the opportunity for banal talk.

"Mother's taken a dear little house for a month in Curzon Street, from a duchess. It's too charming! It's furnished like the 'Moonlight Sonata,' all blues and grays and whites and purples melting into one another, except when there's a bit of black, like a shadow at night. I must show you my den—the tiniest, loveliest place! Mother let me choose the nicest room in the house."

"That's what I want you to do—to show me your den. I was going to ask you—may I call on your people, Dorice, do you think?"

The girl thought.

"Mother will ask you to," she said.

"That will be very kind of her," said the suppliant fervently.

They had made the length of the Ladies' Mile, and now turned to retrace their steps the same way back, under the trees. Both lingered a little, as if thinking that at the end they would part—if only till lunch—and the day would make its little claims upon them. Hardly had the same reflection wavered regretfully across both minds, each knowing instinctively the trend of the other's thoughts, when Harrison followed it farther.

"Meanwhile," he said, "meanwhile, I will meet you here every morning, mayn't I, Dorice? Promise not to disappoint me. Promise to come when I wait by the gate."

She began, womanlike, to tease.

"Suppose I am very tired? Suppose I have been to a dance and am *so* sleepy and can't get up?"

He replied slowly:

"Perhaps then it won't matter so much, because I may have contrived to go to the same dance. In fact, small matters like that don't need contrivance. In this strange world of gay London, Dorice, I've learned a bit, and one thing is that a dancing man is a

dancing man and isn't undervalued. To be a dancing man is more than to be brave or wise or straight or decent. So I shall dance with Dorice."

They looked into each other's eyes, she meeting his for the first time that morning.

"It's going to be a splendid season," she breathed.

"It's going to be a ripping summer."

They walked on.

"Is Mrs. Harrison in town?" she asked by and by, with a quaint return to the conventional.

"Mrs. Harrison?"

In so short a while had Maude become unfamiliar.

"Your mother."

"My—my mother— Oh, no!" he stammered. "She's not here."

He looked away to hide his perturbation, but he did not hide it, and soon he heard her voice saying quickly and timidly:

"Is anything the matter? Have I said—"

Harrison waited to choose his words. At last he said:

"No, nothing. Only—she—she died."

The girl gave a little shocked cry.

"I'm sorry—I'm awfully sorry! If I had known, I would have written to you."

"I know," said Harrison steadily, "that you would have done anything kind."

He felt her hand touching his, taking it for a moment, alighting there like a bird and leaving as swiftly.

"I'm very sorry."

The young man was saying to himself:

"Some day, of course, I shall be able to tell her; some day, when she knows me better. But now it has been made so difficult. I don't even know that she would understand."

She thought of nothing but to wean his thoughts from this recent grief of

his, the wound of which she had so unknowingly reopened. So, although the gate through which she would depart had been reached, and it was ninety-three—though neither had realized the flight of that swift hour—she let him keep her talking a while of anything. He made any pretext to stay her, all the while wondering as to what would be the change in her little fair face, what she would say, if she knew.

He might even, in his reawakened perplexity, his almost despair, have told her all, then and there, but all at once she glanced at the watch upon her wrist, uttered a little horrified exclamation, and fled across Park Lane. He stood, entranced, to see her out of sight before he rode home; and by lunch time he had had time to reconsider, to decide on a postponement of his confession.

Dorice hurried back to South Molton Street, breakfasted in ten minutes, and went up to Stelle's room. Her lazy friend was dressing, after a mouse-size meal in bed.

"Dorice, come and tell me what to wear. I'm going to dress for lunch now."

While they hovered over Stelle's limited wardrobe, the little mouse girl sighed.

"He's very rich, you know, Dorice," she said.

"Is he?" replied Dorice, for she knew that Harrison was in both their minds.

"It's so seldom that men are rich *and* charming," Stelle pursued. "Dorice, if I marry him, I shall be a very lucky girl. You think so, dear?"

"I think so?" Then Dorice said in a voice she hardly recognized as her own, so cold it was, and rough: "But you have only met him twice."

Stelle noticed no change.

"I know that. But Aunt Marian talked about him to me last night, and she says he would be a splendid husband. No one knows him—at least,

few people do—but she's going to take him up. She's going to take him with us to all our dances. Dorice, I'd love to marry in my first season. It's such a triumph."

"M?"

"You've had two seasons, haven't you, Dorice?"

"I have, darling."

"Anyway, you're a sweet thing not to mind playing gooseberry for us. I'll ask you to the wedding, you dear. Be sure of that."

"I shall certainly be at the wedding," Dorice replied.

"Will you be bridesmaid *if*— Of course, I know there's always an 'if.'"

"Even if there weren't, I don't think I can be bridesmaid, Stelle."

"Why not? Dorice, I'll wear my mole. I wish mole wasn't my color, but it is."

"It's very pretty."

"What shall you wear, Dorice? That coat and skirt?"

"No," said Dorice. "Why shouldn't I shine, too?"

While Stelle slipped downstairs, sleek and dainty, to write her aunt's letters, Dorice went to her room and held inspection. She was stimulated to anger. And she told herself plainly, for the first time, how she loved Harrison. Stelle, the mercenary, had sealed that declaration.

"To marry for money," said Dorice to herself, "to sell oneself for cash—how truly horrible it is! How disgraceful! I hope all people who do it are miserable ever after!"

After the important inspection of clothes was finished, she sat down to the luxuries of her imagination. A woman's imagination on the love track is a swift traveler, and a bold one, who balks at nothing. Dorice went through all that had passed between them before yesterday's meeting—infinately little, yet infinitely much. Often had she lain and dreamed, on moonlit

nights, looking from her window into the sky, of that sunset and sunrise when they had met beside the sea. She had thought of that first look, like a revelation, that had passed between them in that most mundane of places, a hotel dining room, which the magic look had transformed. For here was the palace where the princess had met the prince. After that, she had often thought, with tears, of that letter and, rereading it, had wondered what did it mean. Why did he go? Why could he not stay and love?

She did not know and, being of a tremendous faith, would harbor no suspicious answer to her questions. She had waited, sometimes without, and sometimes with, hope.

He had come again.

Now, alone with the happy luxuries of her thoughts, Dorice once more wondered. She unlocked her jewel case, in the inmost recess of which she kept her letter, and read it again.

"Some day," she promised herself, "I shall be able to ask him. Not that it matters, but he will like to tell me. Not yet, but—but some day."

She considered Stelle.

Stelle was one of many women who, from their cradles, ran the race for wealth. Well, they must run fair and admit competition. They could not always win. Their sufferings, after all, would not be love hunger as much as gold hunger. They were, then, considerable.

Lady Albright tapped and came in.

"I'm not disturbing you, dear?" she began, and sat down without waiting to be assured. "You're lunching out, dear," she beamed, "with Stelle and Mr. Harrison?"

"Yes," said Dorice.

"Don't you think him nice?" asked Lady Albright, with a smiling look full of mystery plain as a pikestaff.

"Yes," said Dorice.

"So ought Stelle," replied Lady Albright. "My dear, that young man has twenty-five thousand a year. It takes one's breath away."

"But leaves one's heart intact," Dorice answered.

"My dear girl," said the elderly lady, "how old-fashioned you are! But I don't know about that, either. He's quite attracted to Stelle, and I'm sure the child is most attracted by him. People never will believe in love and money, but the two go hand in hand quite often. Well, dear Dorice, you're older than Stelle, and staid, and I thought you would love to help her. You are such friends. And she's barely twenty yet, you know, barely twenty. How young it is, isn't it?"

"I don't know. I'm twenty-two."

"Ah, age isn't always a question of years, but of character," said Lady Albright. "You're much, *much* older. Well, what I was going to say is I don't care for Stelle to be seen about alone a great deal with Mr. Harrison or any one else, in her first season; but now that you'll all be together so much, it's different. I hope you'll have a very pleasant lunch party, dear. What are you going to wear? Choose a thing that will show up Stelle's subdued style, like a sweet, kind girl."

"I'll look out something," Dorice replied placidly.

The lady went away, and Dorice looked out something, but it was not planned as a foil to Stelle's demureness. It placed the mouse instantly in the background. Dorice appeared before Lance Harrison like a young goddess, and his eyes told her many things that perhaps his lips would repeat tomorrow, in the park.

The lunch was the first of many meetings that were arranged for with unashamed eagerness, and Stelle was a little gooseberry, green and green with the most painful emotion in the world.

CHAPTER XV.

For a month, half through May and half through June, the two girls fenced, each warding off the other's attack sweetly and cleverly. Not once did the truth pass the lips of either; seldom did either cease smiling; but they watched and feinted and dealt rattling blows much as two coarse pugilists in a bloodier ring. For a while, a fortnight at least, Stelle would not see the position; her vanity, utterly overbalancing her tiny, lightweight heart, could scarcely face it. Often, during the last two months at the Geneva finishing school, and since, had she faced the mirror, valuing her powers and appraising what they would bring. Not that she was unromantic, either; she was hotly romantic to her fevered schoolgirl's degree, but she had always been poor. Her frocks were turned, her gloves recleaned a dozen times, her hats renovated to keep up their pride.

How tired she was of all this! How tired her mother had been! Dying, the mother had said to her girl:

"My darling, marry well. Marry money. Do all Aunt Marian tells you. Make the best of yourself, child. Remember."

Looking in her mirror, even in her school days, Stelle had promised herself, "I will marry in my first season." By way of practice, she enacted restricted love scenes with a nice-looking young professor, and she liked it. She was full of the almost wholly sensuous dreams of young girlhood which had been overcultivated in a kind of mental glass house, through which, with some of her companions, she had been always looking.

She wanted Lance Harrison; her pride and her greed and her young, light senses wanted him. After the first dance for which he joined Lady Albright's party, she went home and cried, in a rage. But she said nothing.

She set herself soon to watch and to intervene. Did Dorice meet him on those early-morning walks? Almost Stelle rose early to ascertain, but she could not quite manage that. She wrote him notes, and gave him many commissions to execute for her. She asserted her presence and her personality. But she knew.

After the second dance, for which he joined them at dinner, to go on afterward, the girls fought the first round of their duel. If Stelle had not known before, she would have known that night, when she saw Lance and Dorice dancing together. They were a perfect pair, at whom people looked—people who took an interest in Lady Albright's maneuvers for her attractive pauper niece. People understood that the man was very rich; men liked and women admired him. There was some story—but few troubled to ascertain what it was, or, hearing, they forgot it immediately, or passed it over as, after all, a matter of little moment. The man was rich.

Women looked with hidden envy at the beautiful Miss Waymore on the night of that dance. A few men looked with passing envy at Lance, who had the girl of girls in his arms, because they knew that for a moment the young man was tasting the keenest happiness to be bought with life or love or money or anything in the world. Over and over again during that evening, Lance and Dorice met to dance; not a matter to be much remarked upon in these days when all dancing worth the name has attained so high a level that women practically choose their partners for a season. But they carried in their faces, in their bearing, and in the pleasure that radiated from them, the news of the secret that is never a secret.

But when the happy night had gone by, light-footed, and Lady Albright and her girls were driving home, Stelle huddled back, cold and fretting, in her cor-

ner, Dorice looked from the window at the streets of dawn as if she loved all she saw, and the elderly woman watched them both. She knew what was working in each girl's heart, and it seemed to her only rather tiresome that this young thing should destroy her plan. For her own time was over, it was dim, she was forgetting it; and she was old enough now to long for her bed and to be glad of her breakfast on the morning after a dance.

She thought: "Perhaps I'll tell Stelle not to be fool enough to mind. One can't, after all, order husbands like sugar from the stores."

But she did not catch her niece then. Stelle bundled out of the car first, ran upstairs, and slammed her door. Dorice went next, too happy to be tired, and found a grateful solitude. But she was not alone for long. In two minutes Stelle was there, white, weary, angry, in her tulle frock which, at the end of its wearing, had a beaten look, like battered butterfly wings. She began, while the other girl let down her hair in a cloud:

"Dorice, you're mean! You're damned mean! You know what you're doing as well as Aunt Marian and I."

"I want to go to bed, Stelle."

"So that you can be up for your early walk! I know—though you don't think I do—that you meet him then."

"Mind your own business, Stelle."

"It is my business. I told you, when you came, how things were. You knew. You set yourself to spoil everything—"

"That's a lie! How dare you say so? If you want to say so, leave my room!"

"If it wasn't for you, Lance Harrison would ask me to marry him."

"He never would."

"Has he asked you?"

"I've told you to mind your own business."

"And I tell you again that it is my

business—far more mine than yours. You've got to tell me. I will know."

Receiving no answer, she cried in a high-pitched voice of emotion:

"For God's sake, tell me! I must know!"

Dorice ran to her and, seizing her hands, forced her into a chair.

"Sit down. You're tired out, and you ought to go to bed, as I'm going. And don't speak like that. 'For God's sake!' You were always melodramatic at school."

Stelle looked at her from sulky, side-long eyes.

"You don't know how I feel about it."

"Yes, I do," replied Dorice, her breast heaving.

"Dorice," said Stelle, beginning to whimper, "do tell me, dear. I'm so upset I can't help the way I speak, truly I can't. You're so cold—you don't know. Won't you tell me, Dorice?"

"Tell you what?"

"If he has asked you to marry him?"

Silently Dorice went about her room before she answered. She plaited the gold hair into two ropes and tied each with ribbon, stepped out of all her fine cobwebs of lingerie and into a nightgown as fine, while still Stelle sat there waiting, with pursuant, pleading eyes. Then at last she spoke.

"No," she said, "he has not."

Stelle gasped incredulously.

"So you see," said Dorice, understanding the gasp, "you're making all this fuss about nothing. Mr. Harrison has said nothing to either of us. Perhaps"—she turned to seek for manicure tools on the dressing table, to hide her rosy and triumphant face—"he does not want to marry. Anyway, you've a fair field if you want him. There's one thing, Stelle, that I can honestly promise you, and that is, I am not in your way. There is your path and there is mine, and we can run quite level. Women who think of marriage

as a market must be ready to take sporting risks, Stelle."

Knees crossed, foot swinging, chin in palm, the younger girl surveyed her, still with a hot and unhappy suspicion.

"Tell me this, then: Do you meet him in the mornings on your early walks?"

Dorice hesitated hardly a second before she owned proudly:

"Yes."

"Every morning?" cried Stelle, again with rising excitement.

"Every morning," Dorice replied recklessly.

Stelle rose, quivering:

"So that's why you get up early! That's why you're energetic, and an open-air lover, and all that!"

"That was not my reason," said Dorice coldly. "I always get up in the mornings. And because I always get up, I want to go to bed now."

"Then," cried Stelle in a whisper, "you shan't! I'll stay and keep you awake!"

"You shall not," replied Dorice vigorously.

"Turn me out, then," said Stelle, and threw herself back in her chair and grasped its arms.

Had the two girls been less angry, the absurd scene must then have ended in laughter, for Dorice turned upon Stelle like a fury. But she stopped short within two paces of the chair and stared at the tired, wan, angry butterfly in her battered dance frock like broken wings.

"It's too stupid, too ridiculous, altogether!" said Dorice angrily, turning upon her heel. She switched out the light, jumped into bed, and called out, "I *will* sleep."

The absurd fracas continued. Stelle jumped up, crying with fatigue, ran to the switch, and turned on the light again. And she kept talking; she was determined that Dorice should not

sleep; she was like an ill-controlled child fevered with fury. And all the while, her little thin shrew's mouth sputtered anger. She lost her pretty looks in the pallid dawn; all her soft mousiness departed, leaving her sharp and elfin. Dorice lay and tried to sleep and could not. And at last she laughed—she screamed with laughter.

The laughter was Stelle's undoing. To be ridiculed was the ultimate hurt. She began to wail, and, to hide her face, switched out the light again. And she faltered between her sobs, "Oh, you are unkind! S-s-so—s-so unkind!" until the other girl left her bed and kissed her and stripped off her frock and corsets, and made her lie down, still weeping, beside her.

So, soon, both slept.

At eight, softly came the maid whose services they both shared, with tea. Dorice crept out, but Stelle slept on, and did not wake until she opened her eyes to see her rival dressed and trim, pinning on a hat.

Stelle remembered.

She sat up and said:

"Dorice, you're going out to meet Lance Harrison?"

"Yes."

Stelle sighed heavily. She stretched out a hand to the tea tray, poured out tea, and sipped it. She felt a very little better.

"Your mother would hate it if she knew. Aunt Marian wouldn't like you to do it from her house. You ought to think of other people. Every one would talk if you were seen."

"I don't care," said Dorice.

"Why, you met him the next morning after you'd first seen him here, with us!"

"There you mistake," said Dorice, cold and aloof once more. "Mr. Harrison and I had met before. He was staying at a hotel where we stayed, and his mother was with him."

"Is his mother in town now? Does she know?"

"She died some while ago."

"I suppose he had all the money then," said Stelle.

"I don't care to suppose anything about it," replied Dorice frigidly.

"You've both been horribly sly. Why couldn't you have said you'd met before? There must have been a reason in it."

"Because it is nobody's business but our own," said Dorice, and walked out.

Her buoyant health and youth withstood Stelle's petty attack upon them. She was fresh, and her cheeks had a tender color, when she met Harrison at the accustomed tryst. He now brought his horse no more, but they walked down the quiet paths that many know not, while the dew still hung upon the bushes and revived the flowers. New in the mind of each was the memory of last night's dancing. He was still too humble and uncertain to ask her for what he wanted, and she was far too gloriously certain to trouble about it. But, like folk with a perfect comprehension of each other, they walked away down the intersecting paths, leaving the Row, where a few riders already cantered behind them. And the June sun lighted their June love.

Stelle was up and breakfasting when Dorice came back. Stelle's face was pale, her eyes a little reddened still, in spite of the aids of the toilet table, and her demeanor held a sullen quiet. After a silence, she repeated what she had said in the bedroom:

"Aunt Marian wouldn't like it, Dorice."

"I'm sorry to think that," said Dorice. "But I need annoy her no longer. Mother comes to Curzon Street to-morrow."

Stelle rose and went to the morning room, where she attended to Lady Albright's copious correspondence.

"Life," she thought, "is beastly. To be a sort of pauper relation, and secretary, and any old amanuensis! I must marry decently. It isn't selfish." Then she sighed.

Twenty-five thousand a year!

"I'd marry Caliban with that," said Stelle, as she bumped herself down like a cross child before the desk.

Her aunt trailed in, in a wrapper and cap. She looked at the girl keenly and kissed her, for she was not unkind, and said:

"Everything can't be ordered from the stores, you know, Stelle. Husbands are the awkwardest things!"

Stelle said what had been running in her mind for some days, and she spoke with injury:

"Aunt Marian, you needn't have had Dorice here."

"My darling girl, I thought you'd love it. I thought she was your dearest friend."

"I hate her! Or, I hate what she's done."

"And the Waymores pay so well," Lady Albright continued. "They pay me nearly enough to run you and me for half a season, my dear, just for having Dorice, when convenient to everybody concerned. You must remember," she said a little tartly, "that I'm not a millionaire."

"Aunt Marian, isn't poverty abominable?"

"Very, love," replied Lady Albright heartily.

"Dorice has heaps of money——"

"Not heaps, dear child. Most of the Waymores' money is only life interest, reverting to the nearest male—some cousin, I believe."

"Well, Dorice has more than I. And look how she's—she's butting in. Some women are greedy!"

Far as Lady Albright had traveled beyond romance, she had not forgotten all that she had known and observed in her time.

"Stelle, my dear, you'd better give up gracefully. You see, you've never been in love, Stelle. You're not the kind, and I thank Heaven for it, darling. Otherwise, I'd never have adopted you. But Dorice and Lance Harrison are in love."

"You—you see it?"

"Every one sees it."

"They meet in the park in the mornings."

"The very most innocent place, isn't it?" said Lady Albright, yawning.

"You knew that, too, Aunt Marian?"

"I hear about it, dear."

"Then—then every one knew?"

"Well, no one supposed girls got up early for no reason at all, after dancing till four."

"Dorice has been awfully mean. She knew what I thought, and she deliberately deceived me."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, aunt, she—she met him like a stranger. And they'd met before."

"When?"

"In a hotel where he was staying with Mrs. Harrison."

"With— Well, dear? How interesting!" said Lady Albright suddenly. "Did Dorice know it was Mrs. Harrison, I wonder?"

"Yes, she said so. His mother."

"Oh—yes—" said Lady Albright. "We'll do our letters, dear."

Stelle attended to the mass of the correspondence, but her ladyship wrote a personal note of great charm to Dorice's mother.

Mrs. Waymore called the following day at South Molton Street and was immured with Lady Albright for some while in that lady's private sanctum. Mrs. Waymore, on arrival, laid down a tactful envelope upon her hostess' desk and said prettily:

"I've come to thank you so much for taking care of our dear Dorice."

"And," said Lady Albright, "you have read my note?"

Dorice's mother replied, "Yes," and added, "The naughty child!"

"There's nothing to disapprove of," said Lady Albright. "In fact, I had earmarked him for my own family. But never mind."

"Oh!" Mrs. Waymore cried, with an affectation of contrition. "Tell me all about him."

Lady Albright drew nearer. The movement itself was a hint of caution as if saying: "It is all between you and me." Mrs. Waymore's intelligence responded to it instantly, and Lady Albright began:

"He has come into the Iron money—you know, Iron's shoddy—during the last year."

"Ah," said Mrs. Waymore, "yes. The Irons were north-country people; no one knew them really well. But one has heard of them, of course. And how did this young Harrison inherit?"

Lady Albright took a cigarette and lighted it. This action in some women is the forerunner of a piece of drastic information; it conveys the smoker's immunity and superiority to all forms of excitement; this is what the act conveyed in Lady Albright.

Then she said, inhaling composedly:

"Through his wife, my dear."

"Is he a widower, then?" asked Mrs. Waymore suddenly, with a very close look.

"'M," said Lady Albright, "'M."

After a pause:

"Do you know anything further?"

Mrs. Waymore asked.

"I know the story," replied Lady Albright.

"You must tell me. You must remember that I have my child to consider. With Dorice's happiness at stake —"

"My dear, everything is quite safe. The will was unconditional."

"Oh-h!" said Mrs. Waymore, with a sigh of relief.

"There is no clause about remar-

riage, or anything like that, I am certain. You may take my word for it. The poor thing must have realized that it is no use confining a mere boy."

"The 'poor thing,' dear?"

"That Mrs. Iron."

"Did he marry a Mrs. Iron?"

"Thomas Iron's wife. The shoddy man's. I thought I explained. I say 'poor thing' because I'm always sorry when a woman of—well, our age—makes a fool of herself."

"Was it *that* kind of marriage?" said Dorice's mother.

"Exactly."

"Then," said Dorice's mother, "just who is he?"

"No one knew, I think," said Lady Albright. "At least, he'd been in the Colonies, perhaps—somewhere a long way off, anyway. He was very poor, and she offered him marriage. That's how the story goes. These affairs are not pretty, of course, but it ended quickly in the best possible way, and really, people never remember things for long."

"I wonder," said Dorice's mother, "does Dorice know?"

"I shouldn't think it at all the thing to tell Stelle," replied Lady Albright.

"You are quite right," said Mrs. Waymore gratefully, with another big breath of relief. She continued: "I have a sort of feeling that I've seen him before somewhere."

"So has Dorice. You were staying at some hotel by the sea, I understand."

"He was there with—his wife! Then it must have been his wife."

"But Dorice always speaks of her as his mother."

"Dorice always thinks such sweet things," said Mrs. Waymore.

"That kind of thing is best forgotten, anyway."

"It's generally the woman's fault," said Mrs. Waymore.

"A woman of that age gets what she deserves if she marries a boy."

"Poor fellow," said Mrs. Waymore. "He must often have regretted it."

"It's never really worth while, from the man's point of view."

"Of course," said Mrs. Waymore, confiding and pretty, "it is necessary, absolutely, my dear, that Dorice marries well. As you know, we have no son, and she cannot inherit, and we are so anxious that she should choose for her own happiness. Neither her father nor I would dream of interfering if she and this young Harrison really care for one another. It would not be right."

"You are most wise."

After hesitation, "I suppose the Irons really *were* very rich?" murmured Mrs. Waymore.

Lady Albright inhaled cigarette smoke for a few moments.

"Lance Harrison's income is at least twenty-five thousand a year."

"Well," said Mrs. Waymore, "I must be going. I always superintend my unpacking, and I rushed round to you as soon as I had read your note. Thank you so much for sending it. How is Stelle?"

"Perfectly sweet," replied Lady Albright. "I wish I could do more for her."

"You must let *us* do something," said Mrs. Waymore. "We would like it. Give her my love. She is so pretty. And thank you once more for looking after Dorice."

"I have positively relieved you of all further anxieties," the other woman laughed.

Mrs. Waymore drew her white fox skin about her shoulders, settled her chic black hat, and turned to the door, smiling. Before she went out, she murmured as a desultory afterthought: "Of course, we know that money isn't everything."

Then she drove home.

In the small house in Curzon Street, Dorice had already established herself.

Her mother found her in the little room allotted to her use, curled on a window seat, smoking a cigarette and dreaming.

Mrs. Waymore advanced into the room.

"Well, love," said she caressingly, "I've been talking of you."

"What have you been saying, mother?"

"I don't believe I shall have you long," said the mother, smiling delightedly.

"You will always have me, mother," said Dorice.

"Ah, yes, dear," replied Mrs. Waymore, "in a kind of way, perhaps. But you'll marry. Dorice, haven't you anything at all to tell me? No news?"

"Positively nothing, mother," said Dorice.

All the same, Mrs. Waymore went away and told her husband.

Waymore verified the young man's income; learned his clubs, his pursuits, whom he knew. Two days afterward, Harrison called; two days after that, he dined in Curzon Street; after that, he was asked to their first dance, given at the Ritz; after that, he might drop in to lunch informally, find them any day at tea time, when the fiat, "Not at home," had gone forth to all others. He became Mrs. Waymore's "dear boy." Soon, without a hesitating word, he could take Dorice out to lunch alone, or to tea at quiet places, or motor her out of town for an hour or two. Absorbed on the quest of quests, he became oblivious to his immediate past. He put it away for distant remembrance some convenient time. His life, which had been so empty of purpose and law, was now lived for one great purpose and one great law. He loved, and he loved toward conquest.

TO BE CONTINUED.



WELL BELOVED

LIFE loved her, though it gave and took away.

She was so true, so kind,
So faithful-fond, so innocently gay,
So fair, so clean of mind.

As cowslips gild the grass, love gilt her days,
Long days and full, well spent;
If shadows checkered, still her heart had praise
For every blessing sent.

Death loved her, if it might not show her ruth.
Like to a shattering rose,
She passed from age and earth, to heaven and youth
Whose joy no mortal knows.

MARTHA McCULLOCH-WILLIAMS.



The Innocent Bystander

By William Almon Wolff

Author of "Fargo of the Gaudy Lake,"
"Ebenezer Timpson's Son," etc.

BILL ENWRIGHT squatted on a rock on top of a hill and surveyed the landscape morosely. There was a lot of landscape, and some of it, one would have thought, would have pleased even the most fastidious. There was so much variety, you know, that one ought to have been able to pick out something one liked. But Bill couldn't—or wouldn't—or both. He just sat still and gloomed.

If he looked to the west, his glance could go through a gap in the naked trees and rest on the Palisades, with the ice-choked Hudson in the middle distance. To the east, he could look across the Harlem, but a new gas tank on the other bank discouraged optical excursions in that direction. To the north, there was fairly open country, with disturbing glimpses of the subway and some more of the Harlem. To the south, was New York; and at the thought of certain phases of that evil city—which, for that matter, was under him, too—Bill seemed to brighten. But then his eyes fell on an old, weather-beaten house, with smoke curling from its chimneys. As he looked, an automobile drew up at the front door, and some people got out. Bill couldn't see who they were or what they looked like—he was too far away for that—but he could see enough. His momentary

brightness vanished, and he began to gloom again.

"Damn!" he said, with concentrated hatred.

The house, you see, was between him and New York, in more ways than one. He had to go back to it. It wasn't his house; it belonged to the Forrests. They were giving a house party, and he was a guest. He had come out hoping for inspiration, and he had found none. Of all the lies he had thought of to serve as an excuse for a flight downtown, not one, he knew deep down in his inner consciousness, would pass muster. It took a pretty good sort of lie to get by with Bess Forrest at any time, and to-day, he happened to know, she wouldn't be merciful.

Bill got up after a while and began to galumph his way back to the house. This was Sunday. On Thursday and Friday, it had snowed. On Friday afternoon, it had cleared, and a biting cold had succeeded the storm. That had started all the trouble. Bess Forrest had been inspired to get a lot of people together, by telephone, and bring them up to Sam's abandoned ancestral home—the house that was the victim of Bill's loathing.

Her intentions had been good enough. It wasn't her fault that the weather had changed its mind on Saturday and

rained. She couldn't foresee that the skating and the tobogganing and the snowshoeing stuff she had planned would be messed up by the transformation of a foot or so of snow into slush. When you come down to it, she had more excuse for glooming than Bill—on the surface of things, at least. But Bill had private troubles of his own that will appear in the record later.

Bill had walked pretty much at random. He hadn't worried about roads and paths and things like that. And on the way out, that hadn't been so bad. On the way back, it was different. He fell into a brook that had been frozen hard enough to bear his weight when he had crossed it before, but it had been raining so hard that it didn't make him very much wetter. But taking one consideration with another, as Gilbert's policeman had to do, Bill's lot was not a happy one, either. He had stayed out so long that he had missed his lunch, and he guessed that the meal had probably been a sort of oasis in a dreary day for the ones who had stayed behind.

Because Bill, you know, had no delusions about the rest of the crowd. He knew they weren't much happier than he was. He certainly hoped they weren't. Especially Anne. He had it in for Anne. Of all the pig-headed, hot-tempered little vixens! Oh, Bill was a long way past being polite! His sense of injury was much too active for that. And it got keener and more active all the time as he got nearer to Sam Forrest's infernal house—which Sam was praying he would sell, soon, to some enterprising builder of apartment houses. (Bess, in the meantime, however, insisted on making use of it. She said that as long as times were so bad that they'd had to let their real country place, they might as well pretend they liked this survival of the pre-subway age that Sam had to pay taxes on.)

Finally, of course, Bill got there. He

opened the door and walked into the big hall. And he could see right away that he had missed something—and also that other things were happening that he was not going to miss. For one thing, Alexandra Torrey was having hysterics. And when Alexandra did anything like that, it was an event. If you pressed her, Alexandra would admit, reluctantly, that she weighed a hundred and seventy. She had, too—once. But it had been a long time ago.

As soon as Bill entered, every one stopped talking—except Alexandra, who wasn't exactly talking, of course, anyhow—and stared at him. He didn't want to be stared at. He looked foolish, and he wanted to go to his room and change from high boots and Mackinaw to regular clothes.

"I say—what's up?" he wanted to know.

And then a man he had never seen before detached himself from the crowd that was ministering to Alexandra and walked over toward Bill and stared at him. He fixed Bill's eyes with his own, and you would have thought, perhaps, he fancied that he was a snake charmer and that Bill was a cobra or something of that sort. Bill hadn't seen this man before, it has been remarked, and it may be as well to add that he didn't want to see him again, either. Not ever. He was the sort of man Bill hated. He had a high forehead, but that was because he brushed his hair back. And he had thin lips, and a long, sharp nose, and a mean disposition. Bill could see that. Any one could have seen it. It stuck out all over him. Indeed, he seemed to be rather proud of it.

"This is Mr. Enwright, isn't it?" he asked.

He was trying to be pleasant, you know, and a little jovial, and he was the sort of man who would be more popular if he never tried to be anything but unpleasant—or so Bill thought.

"Why—why—yes—I am!" said Bill. "But——"

"Oh, it's quite all right—quite all right, really," said the stranger. "Please don't be disturbed. I'm very glad that you're back, that's all, Mr. Enwright. Now, you see, we can make a start."

Bill backed away. This sort of thing made him nervous. He was disposed to forgive Alexandra for having hysterics. He would have had them himself had he known how.

"Sam!" he said desperately. "Come here, Sam! What's up?"

Alexandra screeched a screech that was a little louder than any of its predecessors. The stranger rubbed his hands together—and Bill hated people who did that. It made him think of floorwalkers and offensive French farces. He risked a look around and saw Anne, at whom he scowled bitterly. As he might have expected, this thing, whatever it meant, appealed to her perverted sense of humor. Her face was red and her shoulders were quivering. But just then Sam came to life.

"Oh—ah—er—um—that is—Bill—this is Mr. Hampton—Rupert Hampton, you know, the famous—er—detective. Mr. Enwright—Mr. Hampton!" he said.

"Oh!" said Bill. And then, formidably: "Well?"

He judged—and, as it turned out, correctly—that Rupert thought that he, Bill, had done something that needed detecting, and he didn't like it at all.

"Alexandra's lost her necklace!" Sam blurted out. "And—er—well, you see—she wanted the best detective she could get. So she sent for Mr. Hampton—and we were lucky enough to be able to get him here at once——"

"Precisely!" said Hampton. "Now—a question or so, if you please, Mr. Enwright! You were not in the house when the robbery was discovered?"

"This is the first I've heard of it——"

"Thank you! Yes or no, if possible,

when answering my questions, Mr. Enwright. You announced that you were going for a walk?"

"I *did* go for a walk! I——"

"Thank you! Your reasons, Mr. Enwright, for taking this walk at this particular time were——"

"Go to the devil!"

Hampton pursed his lips and looked important. He didn't say a word, you know, but he didn't need to say anything. Bill felt himself getting hot and uncomfortable, and he had a wretched sort of certainty that his face was getting red, too. Sam Forrest had been listening uneasily, and now he butted in.

"Look here, Mr. Hampton," he said. "Mr. Enwright, of course, is absolutely above suspicion——"

Hampton transferred his gaze to Forrest. He started at Forrest's head and went right down to his toes. It was plain that he found some difficulty in restraining his impulse to declare the result of his inspection. Forrest faltered. And Hampton finally broke a highly embarrassing silence. His tone was that of a man who is used to being misunderstood.

"I'm afraid I must remind you that I am in complete charge of this case, Mr. Forrest," he said. "At present, of course, I cannot compel answers to my questions. If Mr. Enwright prefers not to answer them——" He shrugged his shoulders. "That is all, for now, Mr. Enwright."

"For the love of Pete!" said Bill feebly, when Hampton, with a sigh, had turned away. "What's the idea, Sam? Does Alexandra think I stole her bally necklace?"

"Alexandra?" said Forrest indignantly. "She doesn't think! All she can do is yowl! She's been doing that ever since you went out—when she found the thing was missing! The only time she stopped was when she made me send for that—that—detective——"

A minute before, you know, Forrest had had a high opinion of Hampton.

"This is a hell of a house party!" he said suddenly, with the utmost feeling.

Hampton was pussyfooting through a door, and Bill, seeing this, felt better. He was reinforced by a conviction of his own innocence, too. He hadn't stolen the necklace, you see, and he was beginning to realize that life was not quite as empty as it had seemed on the hilltop.

"I don't know, Sam," he said thoughtfully. "Look at the crowd! They look a lot less like a bunch of chief mourners than they did when I went out. They seem to have a sort of renewed interest in life. I shouldn't wonder if this thing turned out to be the making of this party!"

"That's all right for you," said Forrest darkly. "It isn't your house. Don't get to thinking this thing's a joke, because it isn't. If that necklace doesn't turn up——"

"Sneak thief?" suggested Bill.

"Not a chance. The place is wired. Hampton says there's no doubt that it's an inside job, and he's pretty sure one of the crowd here did it! Makes it nice for me, doesn't it?"

"Oh, I say!" said Bill. "You didn't stand for that, did you? Why don't you throw him out?"

"What the devil have I got to say? He's Alexandra's detective! I sent for the police!"

"Well—what do they say?"

"Nothing—yet. They're too sore at Hampton—and at me for letting him be here. They left a flat-footed cop out of uniform on the job. I suppose he's a detective because his aunt's mother's great-grandson knows some one who once bought a drink for Charley Murphy!"

And then every one swept down on them—every one, that is, except Anne, who, for reasons of her own, didn't want to talk to Bill just then, or even

join in chaffing him, and so went to Alexandra, instead, and helped a maid who was trying to calm her. Every one, you know, was a little hysterical by now. They had been observing the methods of Rupert Hampton. And it was altogether seemly that these people, who had known Bill, most of them, since he had worn kilts, should not let him see that they believed, as Hampton seemed to believe, that his walk had been a pretense, and that what he had really done was to go out and bury Alexandra's necklace. He refused to be drawn, of course.

"I didn't steal the blooming thing," he said. "But I would have if I'd thought of it. I'd have done anything that would have brought this house party to life."

So, after a time, he got the details, which were few, but took a long time in the telling. After all, the chief point was that the necklace was gone. Alexandra had slept with it under her pillow. She hadn't come down to breakfast, because she had had a headache, but later she had felt better and had spent the morning wandering around from one woman's room to another. She had put the necklace, which was in a box, in her bag, because she had always believed that thieves never looked for things in obvious places. She hadn't even locked the bag—didn't have a key for it, in fact—had lost it. And when she had looked for the necklace, just before lunch, she hadn't found it. She had insisted upon Hampton, and had been more or less hysterical ever since.

"For Heaven's sake, why?" demanded Bill. "She can buy two or three more, if she likes!"

Two or three people at once said:

"Yes—but you know Alexandra!"

That was just it. She was the sort of woman of whom people were always saying: "Yes—but you know Alexandra!"—or Mary or Sarah or Genevieve

or whatever the name happens to be. They all liked Alexandra, you know; they were sorry Torrey had turned out to be such a rotter. But—well, there you were.

If any one had to lose a necklace, Alexandra, of course, could afford it better than almost any one else. Every one was poor that year. That was one reason for the house party—the chief reason, indeed. And Alexandra had been invited because Sam Forrest was her lawyer, and she was his best client, one of the few who ever paid him at all. He was getting her divorce for her and doing a lot of other things. Alexandra wasn't invited to intimate parties, as a rule. She seemed, rather, to belong to the larger affairs.

Bill got away and went to his room to change, and he passed Alexandra's on the way and looked in. Hampton was there, with another man, who looked bored. Hampton smiled sadly when he saw Bill, and the other man came out and followed Bill to his room.

"You're Mr. Enwright, aren't you?" said this one. "The one who went out for a walk?"

"Sure," said Bill. He held his door open. "Want to cross-examine me?"

"Don't care if I do," agreed the other, who, if he was a detective, seemed to be human, too. "I'm Kelly, from the central office."

"Come in," said Bill. "Are you a friend of Hampton's?"

"I am not!" said Kelly, with some feeling.

"All right—have a cigar—or a cigarette—or both. Have a drink. Sam Forrest's a darned good host. You don't have to go looking for things. Say when."

"Hampton thinks you copped that necklace," said Kelly, a little later.

"Well—do you?"

"Say," said Kelly earnestly, "this case has got me going, Mr. Enwright. It's just about as clear as mud to me. I've

been sore ever since they left me anchored here. There's just one thing I'd bet money on, though—and that is that whoever did get away with that necklace, it wasn't you!"

"You know, Kelly," said Bill, "I thought I was going to like you! You've got a great future before you! Is it my honest eyes or my general appearance that makes you so sure?"

"It's because Rupert the Rooter thinks you did," said Kelly. "Say—that guy couldn't detect a cold in his own head! He's got this whole thing doped out. He says most of the men in this crowd are either in Wall Street or real estate, and he says business is dead and they're all broke. He says——"

"He's damn' right, so far, you know," interrupted Bill.

"He says he's figured it all out that the servants haven't done it, and that there wasn't any way for an outsider to get in—and he's right about that. But it wouldn't make any difference. Rupe never is happy unless he can string out some sort of theory of the crime within an hour of the time he gets on the job. He began to be real pleased as soon as he found you'd gone for a walk. And I will say some of the others sort of helped him out, when he let them see the way his mind was working——"

"Oh, they would!" said Bill appreciatively. "I know them!"

"There was one—Spencer, his name was—said you'd been talking about going West because business was so slow here. And then that little fat one dropped something, and—well, they were most of them in it, with the women trying to keep them quiet——"

"Fine!" chuckled Bill. "Jimmy Marsh's the fat one—and I bet Ben Lathrop and old Murray held up their end! What's Rupe doing now?"

"Taking photographs of finger prints!" said Kelly, with abysmal contempt.

"While you're loafing with the chief

suspect! I'm surprised, Kelly! How do you expect to handle this case, anyhow?"

"The usual way," said Kelly calmly. "I'll stall. We'll watch the pawnshops and the fences. They'll round up all the regulars—though I'll tell you I think Rupe's right when he says it's not a professional job. The stones will turn up, sooner or later, and we'll make a pinch—if that's the right play. There's just a chance that some one here will slip up—if it is an inside job—and give me a chance to pull a grand-stand play."

"How romantic!" scoffed Bill. "Is that the way you people usually work?"

"Sure. All this guff you read about—you don't want to believe that. You can't handle crime by measuring footprints and guessing the meaning of two yellow hairs and a brown spot that you find ten paces to the left and three to the right from the spot where the body was found—all this Sherlock Holmes—Arsene Lupin—Gaboriau stuff. You've got to work according to a system. That's the police way. We slip up pretty often, but we come through a lot of times, too."

"How about the newspaper men?"

"On this case? They'll never hear of it—unless there's a leak. We don't give out any dope on robberies unless we have to. That's why this Rupert person makes me so sick, he and most of these private detectives. They're all right if they stick to their own game, but they don't. That's the trouble."

"You're shattering all my illusions, Kelly," said Bill sadly. "Still, if your little friend Rupert sticks to the job, he'll probably lend a certain color to the occasion. You may be right about his ability as a detective, but you've got to admit he dresses the part nicely."

"Oh, I'll do that," said Kelly. "Well—I sort of wanted to see if you felt like being friends. I may need to be in touch with some of you folks, and I'm thinking you and I may be able to help

one another. I took it you didn't like Rupe much. I'll be around—with the servants, mostly. If you run into anything you don't just understand, or if Rupe makes any cracks—tip me off, will you?"

"Sure," said Bill. "I'd like to see you show Rupert up. He hurt my feelings, and I want to get even."

They parted as friends and allies, you know. If Bill had been somewhat disillusioned as to the detective methods of the police his taxes helped to maintain, it was none the less true that he was prepared to back Kelly against the subtle Rupert. But this, he would have admitted, was attributable to prejudice, pure and simple. He had a sneaking sort of respect for Rupert that Kelly didn't inspire at all. Rupert was so—well, so professional.

And by the time dinner was over, Bill began to feel acutely uncomfortable. Because, you know, he discovered that these people were all disposed to take Rupert seriously! They didn't like to think Bill had taken the necklace—you could see that—but Rupert had impressed them. Alexandra scowled at him once, when she thought he wasn't looking. Bill remembered, uneasily, that he had been misguided enough, in the past, to concoct some highly successful practical jokes. The reason he remembered it was that several people brought them up. No one would say anything definite, but there was a sort of feeling in the air that perhaps—it was just possible—Bill had taken the necklace for a joke or to stir things up, and that since then something had gone wrong, so that he couldn't return it.

So it was a pretty wretched sort of dinner for Bill. For one thing, Anne Chisholm was right across the table from him. That was awkward, because, you see, he had been engaged to Anne until about forty-eight hours ago, and would have been engaged to her still if Anne hadn't been so furiously un-

reasonable as to refuse to listen to his explanation of why he had had to take the girl from Chicago whose mother was thinking of buying a house to lunch. Bill was in real estate, you know, and things like that do come up. It was unlucky that the girl from Chicago had to be so striking in her appearance, and it was still more unfortunate that Anne had happened to come into Sherry's during the luncheon. But, Bill felt, she put herself in the wrong when she wouldn't let him explain.

Bill kept on getting more and more desperate during dinner, and when it was over, he made a bee line for Anne and tried to get her in a corner, where she couldn't get away. But she was altogether too clever for him, and the best he got was a glimpse of her as she went upstairs. She didn't stay long, and when she came down, her face was quite white. She stopped when she was still about three steps from the bottom, so that she looked down on all of them in the hall.

"I'm awfully sorry," she said, "but I don't think I ought to keep quiet about it. It's all my own fault, because it was a wretchedly careless thing to do, after Alexandra's experience. I left that bracelet of mine that has some diamonds in it on my dressing table. And when I went up after it just now, it was gone!"

The unanimity with which every one didn't look at Bill was dreadful. Because, you see, every one remembered then that he had been late in coming down. Kelly had held him up, as a matter of fact, and delayed his dressing. But the fact remained.

Rupert Hampton had seeped in, somehow, just in time to hear Anne explode her little bombshell. His joy was almost pathetic. He fairly gloated, you know. This thing was coming along better than he had dared to hope. He didn't look at Bill, either. He went to Anne, instead, and asked her to take

him up and show him the scene of this second robbery. As for Bill, he was dazed. For a minute, you know, he wondered if he had become a kleptomaniac without knowing it; if he were going around, in a sort of trance, stealing things. He felt in his pockets surreptitiously. And he was actually relieved when he didn't find the necklace or the bracelet. What he did find was the ring Anne had returned to him. He had forgotten to take it out of the pocket where he had put it when she had decorated him with the order of the tin can.

There was a lot of desultory talk. Every one felt uncomfortable, you know. One robbery was pretty bad. And here was another one—and with two detectives in the house! That sort of thing, it seemed to be felt, wouldn't do at all. The only person who didn't seem upset was Alexandra. She cheered up immensely. People had been saying things about her carelessness, and now some one else had proved even worse. And, anyhow, she thought that this second robbery would put the detectives on their mettle, probably.

Bill stood the atmosphere of suspicion as long as he could, and then he went to look for Kelly. He couldn't find him downstairs. And when he went upstairs, he ran into Rupert, who stopped and looked at him. He didn't say a word—just looked. Bill went on, saying things under his breath, and a minute later he encountered Anne. She hadn't been speaking to him earlier in the day, but now she renewed diplomatic relations, so to speak.

"Bill," she said, "come here! I want to talk to you!"

She was just coming out of her room, and she turned and marched in again. Bill followed her hopefully.

"Close the door!" she said.

"Anne!" said Bill, in a shocked tone. "You know—what will people say——"

She stamped her foot. He closed the door quickly.

"I didn't care, of course—I know it's all right," he explained. "I just thought——"

"Bill," said Anne, in a dreadful voice, "why did you do it?"

He was paralyzed. He got red and shaky. He couldn't say a word.

"I—I knew you were hard up—like every one else," said Anne. "But I never dreamed— Oh, Bill—if you'd only told me! I'd have got dad to help you—and I wouldn't have behaved so—about—about that hussy— But to do this! Even to take my bracelet——"

"Anne!" he gasped. "For Heaven's sake! You don't mean you're serious—that you actually believe I took the infernal things——"

She was angry again at once.

"There's no use taking that line, Bill!" she said. "You might as well be honest now! Mr. Hampton has about all the evidence he needs. He's gone to develop the pictures he took in here—and you know what the finger prints will show. I suppose I'm c-conniving at a felony by t-talking to you at all—but— Oh, Bill—why did you do it? Give them to me now. I'll hide them somewhere where they'll be found. It may look as if Alexandra and I had just forgotten where we put the wretched things—and you could go West and try to make a new start——"

Bill's nerves were too shattered for him to pay any serious attention to the inner significance of Anne's ravings. He just got madder and madder. You really couldn't expect him, in the circumstances, to reflect that, since Anne thought what she did, she was acting rather well.

"So you think I've turned sneak thief!" he said. "And all because I had to take a customer to lunch! I don't see why you care what becomes of me if you feel that way! I should

think you'd be glad Hampton had discovered me in my true colors!"

And Anne, of course, choked back her tears and swept to the door, with a good deal of dignity, and held it open for Bill to go out, which he did, with his head up. Three or four people were in the corridor, including Rupert, but Bill didn't care. Anne saw them, too, and she did care. Of course she blamed Bill. You can guess how they stared.

He went on downstairs, still looking for Kelly. By this time he had a positive affection for Kelly. But that didn't help him to find him. Kelly had just disappeared—vanished into thin air, apparently. None of the servants knew where he was. The servants, by this time, were pretty much upset. They had had a good, liberal dose of Rupert. And while Bill was still looking, in the garage and the tool house and other unhandy places, for the missing Kelly, Rupert came along, looking for him.

By this time, of course, anything Bill did was incriminating, in the eyes of Rupert. He would have read a sinister meaning into it if he had found Bill cleaning his shoes.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, Mr. Enwright," he said, "but I must ask you to come with me. There is a little formality——"

Bill went along resignedly. He found every one gathered in the hall around a big table. Rupert went up to it fussily and arranged a lot of sheets of white paper, writing the name of each one in the party on a separate sheet. Then he made them all ink their fingers and record an impression of their finger prints. He gathered up the sheets and looked at them approvingly.

"Thank you, ladies and gentlemen," he said. "As matters have turned out, this is a trivial case—one that even the city police, given time, would probably have solved. My own conclusions are already formed—were formed, I may say, within a very few minutes of my

arrival on the scene. It remains only to verify those conclusions—to support them, rather, by incontrovertible evidence. The processes of pure logic, scientifically applied, enable me, thanks to my long experience, to bridge certain apparent gaps, and it is therefore necessary at times, as now, to go back after the real work is done and construct bridges for those to whom those gaps represent an obstacle. You follow me?"

Seemingly they did. No one said anything.

"Professional criminals—those who have had previous experience of my methods," the detective went on, "are usually wise enough, when they see that I have penetrated their subterfuges, that I have torn away the thin veil of deceit they have sought to fling about their evil deeds, to confess and make restitution. In this instance, while I do not speak with positive authority, I feel safe in saying that if the booty were now restored, there would be no prosecution. Mrs. Torrey? Miss Chisholm?"

"All I want is my necklace!" said Alexandra.

Anne didn't say anything. And once more nearly every one found it more convenient to look anywhere but at Bill. As for Bill, he said quite a good deal, but it was under his breath, and it was the sort of thing one doesn't print. Rupert sighed heavily.

"I shall now develop my photographs," he said. "The comparison of these photographs with the sets of finger prints you have been kind enough to make for me will prove, I feel safe in saying, highly interesting. Quite so."

"Gee!" said Bill suddenly. He didn't mean to say it; it was dragged from him, so to speak, by some force he couldn't control at all. "Alexandra! Your infernal bag must be covered with prints of my fingers! Don't you remember you sent me upstairs last night to get something from it for you?"

"I don't, Bill," said Alexandra, not unkindly, you know, but very distinctly. "Did I? I've been so upset to-day that I can't remember anything!"

Rupert didn't say a thing. But his eyebrows went up until they seemed to be in search of his receding hair, and his back, as he went off to develop his photographs, was the most eloquent back you ever saw.

Bill thought he had never put in such a wretched half hour as the one that followed. There was a lot of talk, and it was all, it seemed to Bill, about crime. Some one mentioned Raffles, and nearly every one remembered some mysterious robbery, in or near some house where they had been visiting.

"Oh, that funny case at Port Jefferson?" some one would say. "Yes! I'd forgotten! Bill—you were there—you remember——"

And then whoever had said it would stop, and get confused, and try to talk about the weather or something like that! Oh, it was a fine, cheerful spell for Bill! He wanted to go and look for Kelly, but he didn't dare. He thought that if he got out of sight again, some one would be murdered, probably, and he would be blamed. Bill had never dreamed that he could be glad to see Rupert coming through a door, but when the detective returned, Bill was more than glad. Rupert bustled in. He had his films with him, waving them around to help the dryer.

"Have you got one of those big Mazda lamps?" he asked Sam Forrest. "I want a powerful light to make my prints——"

Hampton really was a pretty good detective. But, at that, he'd mistaken his vocation. He should have been a stage manager. They crowded around him while he made his prints, and every one was really tremendously excited. It was rather thrilling. It seemed to be the general opinion, if you could go by the way they all looked, that Bill had

spilled the beans with that remark about Alexandra's bag. No one had any doubt at all about what would be revealed when the prints were made.

It was Alexandra's bag that appeared in the first completed picture, too. Rupert bent over, comparing the print with the bit of paper Bill had decorated for him, and then he straightened up triumphantly.

"Well, Mr. Enwright," he said, "I think that now——"

No one saw Kelly come in. He was breathing rather hard, and he walked straight up to Alexandra.

"Here's your necklace!" he said. "It was your chauffeur pinched it, Mrs. Torrey! Climbed up on the balcony and went through your window. I've got him in the Kingsbridge station. You can appear against him in court to-morrow morning."

Alexandra squealed. Bill whooped. Rupert glared.

"But—but——" gasped Rupert. "He couldn't have done that! The stupidity and gullibility of the city police are past all belief, Kelly! How about the wires?"

"Sure. How about 'em? They had me going, too. So I didn't stop at seeing they hadn't been cut, like you did. The storm put them on the blink. Then I got a look at Mrs. Torrey's chauffeur—and after that I got busy. He was trying to dodge me. He's in the gallery—been mugged. He gave me quite a chase, but I nailed him, all right. And I may be stupid and gullible, and all

that, but I'll go right on taking a chance when I catch a guy with the goods in his pocket!"

"How long were you after him?" asked Rupert abruptly. He had just thought of something that restored some flavor to life.

"Since just before dinner——"

"Ah!" said Rupert, with a triumphant glare at the rejoicing Bill. "You may be right about Mrs. Torrey's necklace, but what of Miss Chisholm's bracelet?"

"Huh?" said Kelly. "This one?" He plunged his hand into his pocket and produced the bracelet. "I saw some lady had left her window open, and when I went in to close it, I saw this lying on her table and took it along to keep it safe."

Every one insisted, of course, that they had just been trying to draw old Bill—good old Bill! Did he seriously think they'd believed he was the thief? Poppycock!

But Bill, you know, didn't care. His job was to corner Anne, who was trying to reach the refuge of her own room. He caught her at the door and just picked her up bodily and shook her.

"Now!" he said.

"Well—she was a hussy!" said Anne.

Bill wanted Kelly to be his best man, or an usher, anyway. But Kelly said he'd rather keep an eye on the presents, because he'd feel more at home doing that. So it was arranged in that way.





The Choosing

By Courtney Ryley Cooper

Author of "The Wall Between," "The Ditchdigger," etc.

JIM WHEELER was waiting for the mail. It seemed to Jim that he had been doing that a great deal of late. Standing by the shaft house, looking far down over the divide to where the trail first showed its filmy line, winding its way over the hills from Deadwood, he was watching for the first sight of Mike Saunders, as he appeared over the edge of Bald Tip, riding the old roan that had carried the mail ever since the first strike of pay ore at the "Ethel C." Jim Wheeler was waiting for the mail, and nervously, for there had been few letters from Denver of late.

And when the mail failed from Denver, worry came to Jim's great, bluff heart. Once before it had failed, and the failure had involved a story that hurt. That had been three months ago and the memory of it still burned keen and sharp in Jim's brain.

He looked again and sighed with satisfaction at sight of a figure in the distance. Then he turned—to look into the eyes of a some one who had come to his side; a some one with bright hair and eyes that were deep and blue and pretty, prettier to Jim Wheeler than anything he had ever known before. He smiled, flushing a bit.

"Hello, Ettie," he said. "Just waiting for the mail."

She laughed up at him.

"I could see that easily enough, Jimmie," she answered. "Haven't you been doing that same old thing for a week? The first thing you know, I'm going to be jealous."

"Jealous?" Jim's great voice roared out happily. "Didn't I tell you the kind of letter I was looking for?"

"Yes, but——"

She paused, twisting the strings of her sunbonnet shyly, while Jim watched her, fascinated. It had been that little bashfulness, that little childlike shyness that had set Jim's heart to throbbing the first day Ethel Crandall, the daughter of the shaft boss, had arrived in camp; that had caused him to change the name of the great, gold-giving hole in the ground to the "Ethel C." That childishness, that pretty girlishness, had turned Jim Wheeler back to boyhood again, back to stammering and faltering, back to bashfulness and a feeling of insignificance. For a moment now he stood watching her, forgetting to answer. Then he repeated after her:

"Yes, but—what?"

She looked up at him and laughed.

"Can't you ever say anything but something I've already said?" she chided. "You've—you've been so long answering me I've forgotten what I

was talking about. Saunders is making good time, isn't he?"

Jim Wheeler swung about and looked over the hills.

"Maybe he's got that letter," he mused. "Gee, I hope he has! It's—it's about Fred, you know."

"Fred?"

Jim turned, an expression of anxiety, of half pain, on his face.

"I'm kind of afraid Fred's not—well, not attending to business like he ought to, Ettie. I'm kind of afraid I'll have to go to Denver for a spell. I wish Mike'd hurry with that mail. Maybe I'd better run out and meet him. You—you won't mind, will you, kiddie?"

He looked down at her with a boyish, almost awed respect; then drew back at the flip of her sunbonnet in his face.

"Mind? Of course not, you old silly! I'll wait for you. Now hurry up. It may be good news."

"Gee! I hope so." Jim turned and hurried down the trail toward Mike Saunders, who now showed snaillike as the roan struggled up the steepest hill of the climb.

And as Jim strode forward—his great form almost as sturdy as the pines below, his head bent forward, his massive shoulders moving with a rhythm and a grace that only emphasized their strength—Ettie's eyes grew soft and wistful.

"Good old Jimmie!" she murmured. "I hope it's good news!"

But a half hour later, when again Jim Wheeler faced her there by the shaft house, his face was serious, his lips drawn tight, and the color had faded a bit from his cheeks. A letter was crunched in his right hand. Slowly, somewhat aimlessly, he straightened out its crumpled lines, then tore it to bits and scattered them upon the evening breeze. For a long time he did not speak, looking again

out to where the trail twisted toward Deadwood, to where the slanting rays of the setting sun were adding bronze to the green of the clustered pines. At last he turned and laid a great hand on the shoulder of the little girl beside him.

"Ettie," came haltingly, "I'm going to Denver. I'm going for a good while—I don't know how long. I—I wish you'd go with me. I——"

She moved closer to him, and into the childish face had come a world of sympathy.

"Not now, Jimmie boy," she answered slowly. "I'm—I'm not sure yet." She smiled. "But maybe—some time——"

"That's all right. Honest it is, Ettie." He was looking down at her as if she had granted him the greatest favor in the world. "That's all right. Only——"

"Only what, Jimmie?"

"Only that 'some time' sure seems a long way off, when I get to thinking about it. But gosh! I guess I'd drop dead anyhow, if you'd take me. Ettie"—he stammered and paused—"I'm going to-night. I guess I've got to be hurrying. Will you—will——"

The answer came in a fluttering kiss, as Ettie, like the will-o'-the-wisp she was, bent his head toward her, then ran away, almost before he realized what she had done. Jim Wheeler gasped, then laughed, as he watched the pretty, graceful form disappear around the corner of the shaft house.

"I'm just like a fool when she's around," he mused. "Well"—he turned—"I'd like to see the man who wouldn't be. Hey—Lone Wolf! *Enokone!* Saddle my nag. Hear me? And get ready to help me to Deadwood with my baggage. *Enokone!* Dog-gone it, can't you understand good Indian? *Enokone!*"

Two days later, Jim Wheeler, tower-

ing above those about him, walked out of Denver's union depot and hurried up Seventeenth Street. He sought an office building and stood talking for a long time to the stenographer, who had smiled a welcome to him. He asked questions—many of them, and his face was serious as he walked into a private office and with one great jerk ripped up the serrated top of a roll-top desk. He sat there for hours looking over the papers that had accumulated, sifting the mail. At last he touched the bell for the stenographer.

"How long has this sort of thing been going on?" he asked sharply.

The stenographer stood framed in the doorway.

"About ten days."

"And he hasn't been here at all?"

"No, sir."

A great hand slammed against the desk.

"And yet you let it go on and on without notifying me of it until I guess it for myself! You let it go on, after what happened three months ago! Why didn't you tell me? Why——"

"But I thought every day he would come," the stenographer pleaded. "He told me, when he left, that he'd just be gone for a couple of days—that he was going over to Greeley to see a man about an investment there. And then, every day when he didn't show up, I surely thought there was just some little delay that——"

"That's enough. I understand. That's all."

The stenographer faded from the doorway. Jim Wheeler, his voice tense and low, murmured something to himself, then rose from the desk.

"This thing ends to-night!" he said tersely.

That night, when the lights burned brightly in those spots that mark Denver's faster life, there appeared here and there the great form of a man who seemed to be searching, always

searching, and never finding what he sought. From one café to another he went, to sit a moment and look about him, then to move on. Where the orchestras played loudly and the mazes of the dance held those who frequented the spots, there strolled Jim Wheeler, to growl at the hurrying, bending waiters, then to depart, without placing an order.

At last he entered a place of lights and smoke and music, to start, then rush forward. A woman, lifting her glass, paused as she caught sight of him, looming there by the table. A man, his eyes glazed, turned, then laughed foolishly.

"'Lo, Jim," he greeted. "What's ——"

"I want you—and I want you quick!" came from the man who towered beside him.

The other waved a hand.

"I've got some friends here, Jim, ol' man. I——"

"Did you hear me? I want you!" And there was something in that voice that caused every one in the place of glare and glitter to grow suddenly still, to watch with half-raised glass as the smaller man obediently, silently, rose and followed the larger one from the room.

Fifteen minutes later, Jim Wheeler stood facing his partner across the mahogany table of their office.

"Well, Fred," he said slowly. "What's the excuse this time?"

"The excuse?" The glaze had gone from the other man's eyes now. They were troubled, evasive, like the eyes of a boy before his teacher. "I—I don't guess there is any excuse, Jim. I just ——"

"We'll drop that. Now, Fred, how much business have you handled in the last two weeks?"

"Business? None."

"You let that Pueblo smelter deal fall through, then?"

A hesitancy. At last: "Yes."

There was a long pause. Jim picked up a few papers from the table, looked at them aimlessly, then dropped them again.

"Fred," he said at last, "there's a train for Deadwood out of here at nine o'clock in the morning. I'll go home and help you pack up. Come on."

It was an order of crispness, of finality. Fred Cruce looked up wonderingly.

"I don't understand, Jim——"

"You've got to understand!" Jim's great form towered over him. "You and I are going to change places—that's all. You don't seem to be able to stand this city life—so you're going out into the open. You're going out where there are trees and sky and life and atmosphere and something else to think about besides lights and rinks and gambling and foolishness. Now do you understand? You're going out there and you're going to make a man of yourself. And before you leave, you're going to promise me that you will make the fight, and make it to win!"

"There's a little girl out there who'll help you." A change came into Jim's voice. "A man can't stay in her company very long, Fred, without wanting to be everything in the world that's good. She'll help you, Fred. She'll brace you up to make the fight—because I want her to. And you'll win—when she helps. Now do you promise?"

There was silence in the room for a moment. Fred Cruce's face twitched for a second; then his jaws clamped, his lips tightened. He thrust out his hand.

"Jim," he said slowly, "you're always doing just such things as—as this for me. I promise. I'll make the fight—and I'll win!"

And so it came about that Jim Wheeler took his place at Fred's desk.

And a new man arrived in the "Ethel C" camp as managing superintendent of the great tunnel of gold; a man who gritted his teeth sometimes as he struggled to keep the promises he had made to Jim Wheeler, there in the office by the mahogany table. And when the struggle was hardest, he sought the one house in camp in which the walls, the furnishings, showed the evidences of a woman's touch, where there was always some one to comfort, some one who could say the words that would keep him fighting.

Sometimes at night, when the stars hung low over the Black Hills—so low, it seemed, that they brushed their silver against the tips of the pines—they would walk together to the great bowlder, Ettie and Fred, and she would talk to him—of Jim and the hopes he had and the things he desired for the man who sat beside her.

"And you know you've got to fight, Fred," she would say, the motherliness of her attitude all the more wonderful because of her usual childlikeness. "You've got to fight. Jim wants you to. I want you to. And you will keep on fighting, won't you?"

"I'll keep on fighting, Ettie," he would answer, "fighting for Jim—and for you."

Three months. Four. And in the city—where the jangle of the street cars in the street below racked his brain as he sat at the roll-top desk, where the telephone whirled and buzzed, where the great building seemed to cramp and to confine—Jim Wheeler fought just as hard as the man out there in the open; fought to remain with the life he hated, fought against the memory of the pines, of the trail, winding away down yonder over the hills and on to Deadwood, of the creaking windlass in the shaft house, of the bull bats, the low-hanging stars, and the breeze from the higher hills. And chief of all he fought against the

memory of the girl who had stood with him by the shaft house that last evening, looking up at him and saying:

"I'm—I'm not sure yet, Jimmie. But maybe, some time——"

Seven months. Eight. A year. Jim Wheeler found himself sitting at the desk one day, his mail unanswered, the business of the day undone. Down below, the raucous voices of the newsboys, the clattering of vehicles, the jangling of cars, and the whistles of the traffic men, seared their way across his brain in an unending procession of racking torture. The room seemed small and close. From a window, drifted in a breath of city-laden autumn air.

Jim Wheeler turned and looked almost savagely at the blank wall of the building opposite. He thought of the autumn air out yonder, where the pine cones lay on the ground, and the pine needles and grasses, dried now, crackled under one's boots; where the magpies chattered and the chipmunks dashed hither and thither with their never-ending industry and curiosity.

Then came the picture of the trail, with the haze of autumn over it and the pines glowing green and beautiful against the deadened grass; and she was standing by the shaft house and waving to him as she always had waved when he had returned from his trips to Deadwood. That picture had been frequent of late—ever since her letters had begun to grow briefer and farther apart.

Jim Wheeler groaned and clenched his hands.

"I ain't going to stand it much longer," he muttered. "I've got to get away—I've just got to get away!"

He turned at the sound of an opening door. It was the stenographer, holding out a folded paper.

"I didn't know whether you'd seen this or not," she said. "Forest fires have broken out——"

"Fires!" The relaxed muscles of Jim Wheeler's great body had stiffened as if electrified. He seized the sheet from the girl's hands and glimpsed the typed lines. "A hundred miles away"—Jim was talking to himself—"but if the wind should start right—if— Miss Gregg!" He had risen and banged down the top of the desk. "Things have got to run themselves here until I get back. I'm going to the mine."

As Jim Wheeler whirled out of the Trust Building and started toward his hotel for his things, a man and a girl stood by the great bowlder at the "Ethel C." A pack mule, slightly loaded, browsed at the twigs and brush near by, but the man and the girl did not notice. They were looking far across the hills to where the sky was darkened by a tinge of grayish black, the danger signal of the hills.

"The wind's against it, if nothing else, Ettie," the man said. "And besides, that fire's a hundred miles away."

The girl shielded her eyes against the sunlight.

"I know," she answered, "but you can't tell, Fred. A forest fire——"

"But there isn't a chance in the world that it will reach us. In the first place, it's got to leap the Cheyenne, besides getting across the big valley and Spearfish Cañon. And besides, the wind's against it. About the only thing it'll do"—he laughed—"will be to drive that bear a little closer. I've made up my mind to one thing." He paused to assure himself that the pack mule was still near. "You're going to have a bear rug for this winter. And I'm going to get it for you." He reached forward and patted her on the cheek. "Besides, I won't be gone long, just long enough to set the trap and come back—to-morrow night, say. Won't you let me do even that little thing for you?"

He smiled and came closer, but Ettie, a strange something in her eyes,

had turned away and was looking down the hillside.

"I wish I knew what Jim will say," came finally.

A twinge of displeasure crossed Fred's face. His hand caught hers.

"Can't you leave Jim out of it for just a little while?" he begged. "Can't you see, dear? I'm not trying to take advantage of him. I'll play the square game with him, just as you want me to. You want us both to be together before you, so you can choose—and I'll have him here. But won't you listen to me, just for a little while? God knows I owe Jim enough. He's been everything in the world to me. He made me. He saved me. And he sent me here—here where I met you. Isn't that enough to be grateful for?"

"But, girl!"—his voice was pleading—"Jim isn't the man for you. He's just Jim all the time, just big-hearted, good-hearted Jim. Nothing more, Ettie. He'd be good to you, I know. But would he give you all that you want? Could he be everything to you that a girl like you would require? Jim loves you, Ettie, but he's only just a great, big-hearted boy. He wants you—but for every atom of longing in his heart, there's a thousand times the amount in mine. Ettie—girl—you're all I think of. You're everything in the world, just everything!"

She pressed his hand tight in hers, and Fred saw that there were tears on her long lashes. His arms infolded her, but she freed herself and stood trembling, her hands clenched tight.

"I want to be sure, Fred," she said firmly. "I want to have you both together and see for myself. If I'm going to love you through life, I'll love you whether Jim is here or thousands of miles away. And if I am going to love Jim, and be his wife, I'll do so in spite of everything. But can't you see?"—she was pleading now—"it's all so new to me—all of this? I don't

know men, Fred. I'm not like some girl who has been with men all her life and knows whether what they say is true, whether they really care or not. I—I"—she straightened—"I'm going to write to Jim to-night, Fred, and tell him to come."

"To-night?" Fred started. "But, Ettie, won't you give me a little time? Let it wait a while, won't you? Wait until spring and then choose between us. Won't you—please? Jim doesn't need to come now. He can't come. He's busy—he's—"

She stopped his speech with a smile and a pressure of the hand.

"I'm going to write to Jim to-night, Fred, and tell him to come. I'll not tell him why. I'll tell him you asked me to write—that you want him here. And then—" She halted. "Good-by, Fred," she ended. "Good-by and good luck."

"Good-by, Ettie," the man answered.

And far down the trail he looked back to see Ettie still standing there, looking out into the distance to where the pines grew faint and misty and the sky was gray with the smoke of the fires in the distance.

For hours he moved on silently, the pines about him and the plodding form of the pack mule ahead. Now and then he turned aside to the bank of some small creek to look for footprints in the softer earth, then went on again. Sunset. Night. He slept, and with the sun was on the trail again. Noon came—and a little exclamation from Cruce as he bent low beside a tumbling brook. The tracks were still plain, still fresh. He mounted a bit of a hillock and sought the gully. The tracks were there, too. He chose his spot. Out from the pack came a great steel contrivance of jaws and springs; the heavy chain was unrolled and fastened to its ponderous drag. Slowly, carefully, Cruce tied the bait to the plate and seized the jaws of the trap to bend

them back to position. A few inches; his muscles strained. A few more—

A scream echoed high and shrill through the hills, the scream of a man in agony. A groan—and the writhing form of a man lay on the ground, his arms pinned to his sides, his face distorted with anguish, with horror. Cruce's hands had slipped—slipped and thrown his arms and body into the mouth of the trap, and the clamping jaws had bitten far into the flesh as they had shot into place.

He screamed again, screamed with pain and terror. It seemed that his voice echoed for miles, that it reverberated up one cañon and down another, but no answer came. He strained his shoulders that he might look about him, and screamed with the agony the movement caused. But he had caught sight of the pack mule. The pack mule and only a few feet away! Perhaps if he could reach it—if he could only find some way of dragging himself to its back—

He writhed to his feet, then sank again with the agony of the trap's weight, the biting of its jaws. Again he struggled up. He took a step, and chattered with the pain. For at the end of the great chain, lay the drag, the drag of many pounds weight that he must pull after him at every step of his progress. Again he fell to his knees. He called to the pack mule—he coaxed, but the animal, unheeding, nipped unconcernedly at the shrubbery.

He rested—if anguish can be called rest; then once again began his agonizing journey. A struggle—the drag moved an inch or two and Cruce's drawn lips crinkled with a laugh that echoed mockingly up the cañon. Another great jerk—he had come nearer. Once again—he sank to the ground, to lie gasping. Again he struggled, then rested, while the clamping jaws, with each effort, bit deeper, through his clothing and into the muscles of his

arms and breast. Once more— It seemed that the teeth were seeking his very heart, yet he struggled on. An inch more—an inch more— He found himself repeating the words as he fought and twisted to reach the animal which might mean safety.

The mule had turned in its grazing and was approaching him. Wildly he jerked his body forward with every fiber of strength left in it. He stumbled, fell—then lay on the ground and sobbed. Frightened by this imprisoned specter of humanity, the mule had whirled and galloped off among the pines.

A long time Cruce lay there, sobbing and crying, like the child he had become. Then came silence. His eyes had closed in unconsciousness.

It was sunset when he awoke. For a while he lay motionless, only bending his head to gaze stupidly down at the clamping jaws that were sinking ever farther into his flesh; then, as consciousness of his situation returned, he started up, peering wildly about him. It was then that he saw, palling the sunset, a band of smoke across the sky, heavier now, far heavier, than it had been earlier in the day. He noticed, too, that the breeze, which was just beginning to swing the lighter branches of the pine trees, bore on it the scent of turpentine and of smoke. Cruce raised his head. His eyes narrowed.

"The wind's changed," he muttered—"and the fire's coming!" He repeated the words, dully, as if they would aid him by the fear they caused. "The fire's coming—the fire's coming!"

He started and laughed. Just over the hill was the brook. If the fire did come, he could crawl there and lie in the water. He could—

His reverie broke off; he had remembered the drag. Regardless of the pain, he struggled to his feet. Wildly he jerked at the cruel weight and cursed

it, but it did not yield. He sank to the ground again, and with hopeless eyes watched the sun die in that bank of smoke, which grew ever denser, heavier across the sky.

Silent he lay there, while the sun departed and evening came, while the first stars shone out in the velvet above, while in the west grew another glow as of sunrise—the glow of the approaching fire. In silence he watched it grow redder, uglier, with every hour.

Dawn, and with the dawn a stifling sensation, a gasping for breath. The air of the forest was heavy with the smoke that was sweeping through the pines on the breast of the morning wind. The fire was nearer; he could see the glow of it even in the daylight. A bull bat fluttered aimlessly through the trees, descended near to him, then shot on again. Not far away came the crackling of twigs, as some animal of the wild fled before the approach of the flames.

From afar there came the sound of a great roar, as of an explosion. Cruce turned his head the slightest bit. It was at the mine—he could tell that. They were dynamiting the forest there, clearing a great circle of safety that would send the peril around them. He smiled. They had dynamite, then. They were safe and Ettie was safe!

Ettie was safe! The thought brought a thrill that triumphed even over the clamping of those jaws of steel, even over the agony of the imprisoned arms and the lacerated breast. Ettie was safe! He repeated it. He liked the words—they were better than the sound of the brook. Ettie was safe! Yes, they were much better than the sound of the brook, much better—

So that was it; that was the something that had gnawed at his throat all these hours, while the smoke whirled and choked and strangled. Thirst! Thirst—and just over the hillock tum-

bled the brook, singing its way to the sea, singing and mocking. Just over the hillock—just—

He turned his head that he might chatter at it, that he might gibe and shout foolish words at it, as if it were a human being. He turned—then narrowed his eyes as he looked far down the cañon, straining against the smoke and the darkness, that he might be sure, that—

It was an object that moved! A man! A man on horseback who was urging his horse through the pines and on toward the tiny cañon of the brook. Cruce wondered—wondered why a man should face the smoke and the flames that were rushing ever nearer, while up there at the mine the dynamite still boomed and the zone of safety widened. Then he shouted wildly. Perhaps—perhaps it was some one seeking him. He had not thought of that. Again he shouted—and again. The blackness of unconsciousness surged over him for just a second as he struggled to raise himself, to free himself from those biting, gripping jaws. Then his mind cleared. He screamed again, his voice shrill and high.

But the man down the cañon did not seem to hear. He had left his horse now, and was dodging along from boulder to boulder toward the creek bed. Cruce shuddered; he could see that the first flare of the flame was beginning to creep through the pine carpeting of the forest, writhing on toward the man below, following him, it seemed, like some angry, living thing. A second and the struggling man below vanished; another and he stood out upon the top of a boulder as he leaped forward. Cruce wondered at the massiveness, the strength of him. He screamed again. He knew the man now; it was Jim—Jim Wheeler! Jim caught by the fire on his way from Deadwood. Cruce watched him, and wondered at the sud-

den dullness that had cramped his brain.

"He'd got her letter," he droned. "He'd got her letter. I hadn't thought of that. I——" The choking smoke was strong upon him now; slowly it was deadening his brain—that and the agony of the clamping jaws. "No—he couldn't have—— No time—— Her letter—her letter!" His head sank low. "Her letter—her let——"

The struggling form relaxed, lay motionless. From above, a flaring brand descended and fired the tiny clump of pine needles raised by the drag, but Cruce did not move. Faintly through the darkness under the trees showed a gleam of red, but Cruce did not shrink from it. The roaring had grown louder—wilder; the red beneath the trees had turned to the lighter hue of greater heat now; a tree near by crackled with the heat and flame; a brand descended upon Cruce's clothing and glowed there.

A shout rang out from the creek bed, and the giant form of a man plunged over the hillock. Great hands pawed at the burning clothing. There was a tensing of straining muscles, and slowly the steel jaws of the trap parted. Bracing it open with his foot, Jim Wheeler lifted out Cruce's limp body and raised it in his arms.

A rush—over the hill and into the creek, where the big man bent low, and tenderly, hurriedly, dashed the cooling water of the brook into the face of the man he held.

"Fred!" he called and waited—waited in spite of the cracking roar that pursued him, in spite of the sparks and the burning twigs that fell close about him now. "Fred! Fred! It's Jim. I'll take you out all right, old man! It's Jim—Jim Wheeler!"

There was a slight movement. The eyes opened for just a second—then closed. The lips moved.

"It's Jim—and he's got her letter.

She wants to choose between us—
She doesn't know——"

The face of the man above whitened; his eyes narrowed. The fire, the danger—everything—was forgotten now—forgotten in a fear that had seized his heart and gripped it like the jaws of the bear trap. A great spark lighted upon his clenched hand and burned deep. He brushed it away unconcernedly. Savagely he shook the limp body in his arms.

"Say that again!" He wondered at the hoarseness of his own voice. "Say that again!"

But the lips refused to move; the eyelids remained closed. Jim Wheeler straightened. He stood there, immovable, unseeing, heedless of the heat that blistered his face and his bared arms, of the sparks that were falling close about him, of the smoke that choked and strangled.

"So that's it!" he muttered at last. "That's it! That's the reason he stayed—that's the reason the letters didn't come—because he'd been—he'd been——"

A temptation flared through Jim Wheeler's brain, a temptation as fierce and hot as the flames that rushed through the forest. Here in the brook lay safety for one; for two, and one a man unconscious, it might mean——

The temptation burned deeper; it seared its way to Jim's heart. For just a second his hands relaxed, and he bent forward for the struggle alone. Then he straightened.

"So she wants to choose!" The words came roughly, strangely. "She wants to choose! Well"—and it seemed that every muscle of his body trembled—"it's a square game. And if she plays square, then I play square! Jim Wheeler"—his teeth gritted—"you've got a fight to make. Now make it!"

His arms clenched tight about Cruce's lacerated body, he started forward,

bending low that he might have every advantage the stream offered, splashing, floundering, stumbling, but fighting on. The flames were nearing now, he could see the pines not fifty yards away bending before the breath of the heat, withering. He could feel the sting where his face had blistered, where the skin was rising on his arms. And yet he held to that inanimate figure, yet he struggled on.

A hundred rods. He dropped to his knees and laid Fred's body in the water, then fell beside it. He buried his head to wet his hair, then raised himself to stumble on with the charge he had taken upon himself to save. The fire was on him now. Perhaps

He turned his head the least bit to the wind. It seemed to him stronger—and the knowledge thrilled him. Then a gripping-fear once more settled in his heart as he noted the close, thick shrubbery of the banks. He whirled. Down the cañon showed a spot which the fire already had passed. If he could reach it—

A great flame, shooting outward from the bank, enveloped him. Another—another—but he fought on, dropping now and then to drench himself and the man whose life he sought to save, then struggling on again. A great branch of flaming pine flared through the smoky air and settled upon his shoulder. With a beastlike scream, he shook it off and fought on. A mountain lion, its coat aflame, its great jaws open and hissing, circled through the smoke and fire and plunged before him, tripping him and sending him headlong. He shouted—he sobbed—then he struggled to his feet and once again strengthened his grip on the man he held. The spot ahead was nearing now. Jim's massive head sank lower against the flames that shot out at him.

"You've got to make it!" He found he had been repeating the phrase a long

time now. "You've got to make it, Jim! It's for her—it's for her!"

A rush, a flare, as the flames rushed over him and enveloped him; a cry of pain as they caught a partly dried portion of his shirt and ignited it. But it was impossible to stop now—with that sentence echoing in his brain:

"You've got to make it—you've got to make it!"

Fred's shirt was blazing, too; Jim bent low and with one great sweep extinguished it in the tumbling stream. On—on— The flames were eating into him—and yet he could not stop. On—on— A cry—a stumbling step, and he plunged forward, half senseless, into the stream beyond the wall of fire.

For just a second he lay there, drinking in the comparative coolness of the brackish water; then he raised himself to dash great handfuls of it upon Fred's white face. Almost tenderly he rubbed the temples of the unconscious man; then bent low, to assure himself that he still breathed, that he still lived. A moment of rest; then, stumbling, struggling, he lifted the still unconscious man in his arms and set out through the blackened, smoking wastes toward the mine.

An hour. Two. Three. Four. A blackened, seared being, his clothing burned and torn, his flesh reddened and blistered, stumbled his way across the safety area of dynamited trees and earth toward the cabins of the "Ethel C." He sought a door, and with one great lunge, shot it open. He laid his burden on the bed there and turned toward the white-faced man before him.

"Get Bill Gordon," he ordered, and there was a wild imperativeness in the voice. "He knows more about medicine than the rest of us. Where's Ettie?"

"Ettie?" The white-faced man started forward. "Jim—I didn't know you—"

"Get Bill Gordon! Hear me? It's Cruce. He's hurt—and we can't let him die! We can't do it, Crandall! He's got to live, understand me. He's got to live!"

A lithe form that waited at the doorway caught the message and slid away—Lone Wolf, the Indian. For just a glance Jim Wheeler watched him speeding animallike toward the cabins, then he turned to the form of Cruce. Dazedly he fumbled at the clothing, muttering to himself. The reaction had come now. Vaguely he noted the movement of the breast; stronger, it appeared. From seemingly far away sounded the voice of Crandall, asking questions. Wheeler did not answer. The wounds lay before him.

A form in the doorway. It was Gordon. Swift movements; a snap as the medical kit of the village popped open; a moment of waiting. Jim Wheeler's hands gripped.

"He'll live—he'll live?" he questioned roughly.

The man bending over the cot turned.

"It's a question of nourishment and nursing, Jim," came the answer. "But he'll live. Hand me those bandages."

Jim Wheeler bent, then whirled. A choked scream had come from the doorway, and Ettie, her face paled by the sight before her, was beside him.

"Jim," she begged, "Jim—he's going to live? He's—"

Jim's eyes fastened themselves stolidly upon the form of Lone Wolf, as the Indian came silently in at the door. His lips moved slowly.

"Yes—he's going to live. He's got to live. That's why I saved him—for the choosing!"

"The choosing?" The girl started and her eyes opened wide with wonder, with half fright. "Jim—you knew, then?"

"Yes, I knew." There was something savage in his voice. "That's why

I saved him—because I knew. And because you wanted to play square. That's why!"

He broke off, clenching his jaws. Ettie had turned away to kneel at Fred's side, to call his name. Silently Jim Wheeler, his head bent, his teeth steadily biting their way into his purpling lips, stepped out of the cabin.

Some one stopped him with a question; he mumbled something and walked on. The great, uprooted trunks of trees confronted him; he stumbled past them, unheeding. The blackened, stenching trail of smoking mountain-side stretched downward before him. On he went, aimlessly, blindly.

Day faded; the stars came out. Jim leaned against a blackened pine and gazed toward the shadowy outlines of the camp. A light glowed in Crandall's cabin and figures moved about. Jim watched them, dully.

"He'll live—" He was repeating the words of Bill Gordon. "It's a question of nourishment and nursing. But he'll live—he'll live."

Slowly he approached the cabin and peered through the tiny-paned window. He groaned and moved away. And yet it had been the sight he had expected—Ettie there by the bedside, her hands smoothing back the hair from Fred's forehead, her lips smiling down upon him.

He sought the old bench at the shaft house and sank upon it. His head dropped forward, but he did not sleep.

"I'll—I'll do my best not to show it," he murmured. "They'll think—I'm as glad of it as—as they are."

A gray light in the east; then gold; then the sun. Jim Wheeler, his face lined and aged, rose and prepared to face the world again. Then he braced himself against a beam. Ettie was there, facing him, smiling at him.

"He'll live—he's all right?" The question was forced, slow. Jim moistened his lips and waited.

"Jim"—she had come closer now and there was pleading in her voice—"won't you rest? Can't you forget—"

"Forget?" The savagery flared again, then faded. "That's—that's all right," came slowly.

There was a long pause. Ettie, hesitant, her hands twisting her apron a bit, moved nearer, near enough to touch his arm.

"Fred wants to see you, Jim."

"I'll—I'll see him after while, Ettie."

"No—now, Jim. He's much stronger and he wants to see you. He's been asking for you all night—but we thought you were sleeping. We didn't know— He's been asking for you all night," she repeated. "I tried not to let him think about it, but he wants to see you. He wants to tell about"—there was a pause—"about everything that's happened here since you've been gone and to thank you—"

A flame of anger shot through Jim

Wheeler, then left him shy and boyish before the girl whom he worshiped. He laughed, chokingly, rackingly.

"That's—that's all right, Ettie," he stammered. "He—he had the chance and he took it. I guess that's about all that's necessary. I—"

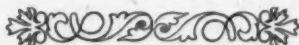
Ettie's smile, radiant, yet motherly, halted him. She stretched out her hands to him.

"Fred wants to see you, Jim," she repeated, and there was something in the slow-spoken words that thrilled him. "He wants to thank you—and to tell you that he has helped me in something; that he realizes now; that he'll be the best friend—"

Jim the strong, Jim the massive, was trembling now, trembling like the boy he always was before her. His voice sounded strange, far away.

"Ettie—Ettie!" he stammered. "Ettie, you—"

"I've chosen, Jimmie!" she said softly, and she lifted her lips to his.



FEVER

RED maggots curling in the hidden places of my brain.
I have forgotten all—all save red!

Red is the color of the crimson sun

When day is at the close;

Red is the color of the Scarlet One

Whose heart is faded rose;

Red is the color that the wild wind blows

When fire sets fire to fire;

Red is the color of all hidden woes,

The soul of all desire.

Red is the color of man's blood when love cuts deep.
Oh, God, if I could sleep!

FRANCES CAROLINE WILLEY.



Unsavage Breasts

By Robert Rudd Whiting

Author of "The Golden Idiot," "The Judgment of Jane," etc.



TOM KELLY did not paint, write, sculpt, or—he thanked Heaven—sing or play. The only reason he shared lodgings with Percy Woodward in the Mendelssohn Studios was that they had got into the habit of rooming together at college, and that Percy worked at his music only during the day, while Tom was down at business.

"I don't want to seem unreasonable about it," Tom had said, when they had finally agreed upon this arrangement, "but you'll admit yourself, Percy, that music is the one art that can't be practiced in decent privacy. A man can daub off pictures or scribble off books without disturbing the whole blooming neighborhood, but the moment you begin decomposing those symphonies and things of yours, you litter up the ears of all the peace-loving people for miles around. Now that fellow across the hall—DeBois, or whatever his name is—he can paint pictures all day long without hurting any one but himself."

"Poor chap," said Percy, running his long, bony fingers through his pompadour, "he's leaving next Monday. The elevator boy told me to-day."

A week later new tenants moved into the apartment opposite.

"Aunt and niece, according to the elevator boy," Percy told Tom that evening. Then, with malicious satisfaction: "They have a piano."

Tom groaned.

"Still, you can't tell," he said hopefully. "Lots of people who don't shoot own pistols."

Almost as he finished speaking, a few faint bars of piano music came from across the hall. Then a voice, warm and velvety, like Burgundy translated into sound, flowed into the "Sapphic Ode" of Brahms. Percy Woodward quickly raised his hand for silence and listened spellbound to the end.

"Lord, what a voice!" he said raptly.

"Sounded all right to me," growled Tom, pretending to misunderstand. "Shows how little I know about it."

The next morning, as Tom was leaving the apartment, the girl and her aunt came out of the door opposite. If he hadn't seen the aunt first, he wouldn't have seen her at all, for his eyes belonged to the girl at first glance. *Her* eyes were the color of pussy willows, and they had long, curling lashes to protect them from the glances of bold men named Kelly. Her little round silver-fox turban and neckpiece set off hair the color of tired gold and skin that made satin seem sackcloth and ashes. Her mouth—Tom Kelly understood for the first time where Cupid had got his big idea.

That night when he returned from work, he began to draw Percy Woodward out on the subject of music.

"I knew your dislike for music was all affectation," Percy told him. "You just wouldn't let yourself like it."

As Percy talked and explained and illustrated, Tom became downright enthusiastic. Percy promised to take him to the Philharmonic the following Thursday.

Next day Tom delayed his departure for downtown until he heard the door of the opposite studio open. In the elevator, while aunt merely sniffed, the girl demurely acknowledged his "Good morning." He noticed that her well-cut shoes, while small, gave the impression that her feet were even smaller.

Two mornings later, as she was leaving the elevator, she smiled a little, and their eyes held hands for one delicious moment.

And then came a morning when she came into the elevator auntless. He called her "Miss Daley"—the elevator boy had told him—and she called him "Mr. Kelly"—the elevator boy had told her. During the short walk to her subway station, he gave her to understand that he was simply crazy about music. He unblushingly expressed joyous surprise at discovering that she, too, was crazy about music. All the rest of the day, his mind was busy trying to prove that things which are crazy about the same thing must be crazy about each other. He was sure of the theorem as far as he himself was concerned. But women are so illogical!

At the Philharmonic, Percy Woodward found Tom an eager and apt pupil.

"I've caught the hang of a symphony all right," he told Percy afterward. "All I need now is the language. For example, a little squeaky bug runs out on the kitchen floor. A man with a baby violin tries to stamp him to death, but the bug runs out from under his foot. Another man tries to kill him, but he gets away from him, too. Then the men with the big he-fiddles take a hand, but the bug scurries back along the baseboard to the fellows with the

little violins who were trying to kill him in the first place. That makes everybody sore and they all get after him, rushing around, overturning tables and chairs and things, until the whole gang of 'em finally corner the poor little cuss and squash him to death in the middle of the floor. Get what I mean? Well, what's the musical name for the bug?"

"I presume," said Percy stiffly, "that you mean the theme."

In this way Tom, being quick and Irish, soon acquired a fluency in musical patter that would have turned a Washington Square soul with artificial fruit in her hair green with envy. He used his new accomplishment to insinuate himself into the good graces of Miss Daley.

He told her how much he enjoyed her singing. She flushed delightfully. She hoped it didn't annoy him. She pleaded guilty to having listened to the piano in his studio, and asked him how his symphony was getting along. He mumbled something about "Cyrano de Bergerac"—what a wonderful story for an opera it would make—and let it go at that.

Before very long he found out that her first name was Mary—not from the elevator boy. One day they drove up to the Claremont for luncheon in a hansom, and on the way back it was so dark that they couldn't see to hold hands with their eyes. They had to use their hands.

Tom hadn't actually made love to her, but this probably didn't deceive Mary. Every real woman knows the difference between a parlor snake and a lover—a parlor snake is a man who says what he doesn't mean, while a lover is a man who means what he doesn't say.

That evening, sprawled out in an easy-chair, while Percy was pasting press notices in his scrapbook, Tom's thoughts basked in the afterglow of the day's happenings. What if she did have

a glorious voice? Even as he asked himself, the velvety contralto across the hall began to weave rich sound tapestries. Well, what of it? Perfection without some blemish to set itself off can not be perfection. Better a beautiful voice than a shiny nose or a misplaced mole. He shuddered at the sacrilege, and made his decision then and there. He gloried in the very sacrifice that was to prove his devotion.

"Percy," he asked, "could you get me two tickets for the Philharmonic to-morrow?"

"Why, yes. But I can't go with you, I'm afraid. I——"

"Don't be afraid."

He jumped up, strode out of the studio, and crossed the hall. As he pressed the bell, the singing stopped. Mary Daley opened the door.

"Would you like to go to the Philharmonic to-morrow?" he asked. "I wish I could ask your aunt, too, but I've only got two tickets, and——"

"Why, that would be wonderful. I'd love to!"

After the Philharmonic, they had tea at a little place that Tom knew. They had so much to keep from saying to each other that it took them a long time not to say it.

"It must be 'way after dinner time," said Mary, when at last they had started back to the Studios. "I don't know what auntie will say."

As the elevator boy slid the door to after them, leaving them outside their studios, Tom suddenly became transfixed. That beautiful contralto voice—low, liquid, now soaring——

"It's your aunt that sings!" he suddenly blurted, turning accusingly.

But she, dumfounded, heard only Percy Woodward's brilliant trills and runs—up and down, up and down——

"That piano! And I thought it was you!"

"And you don't sing?" he persisted excitedly. "You're not even musical?"

She shook her head.

"I loathe it!"

A great light burst upon him. He placed his hands on her shoulders and looked her squarely in the eyes.

"Then you went to that concert to-day," he accused, "simply because—because you thought——"

Blushing, she nodded.

Impulsively he drew her to him and kissed her. The second time, having recovered from her bewilderment, she kissed him back.

That night they went to the movies—the "silent drama of the screen."





PLAYS AND PLAYERS

By

ALAN DALE

IN England, many years ago, I went to a ball given at a lunatic asylum by some perfectly well-behaved lunatics, and danced with a very nice, pretty young girl who, in the course of our gyrations, informed me that she was really the moon; also, that she had once been engaged to a man who was the sun. Of course I expressed no surprise, and my ultrasanity was not vanquished. Still, the odd impression remained and remains to-day, and—

Apparently sane and beautiful ladies insist upon telling me that they are stars—constellations, so to speak—and I read all sorts of charming stories, written in abiding sanity, to that effect. I quite realize that, in the jargon of the theatrical profession, these ladies *are* stars. Most of the actors and actresses who play leading parts in stage entertainments are politely called stars. They admit it themselves; they modestly have no scruples about posing as luminous celestial bodies. Unlike the pretty little lunatic with whom I waltzed, these stars are at large, absolutely free, and interviewable, and the etiquette of the theatrical star is precise and unmistakable.

I have never forgotten that pretty little girl who was the moon, and to call an actress a star has always been rather humorous to me. I suppose I have done it several hundred times, in the course of a pernicious career, but it has always jarred. I sincerely wish that dominant

actresses would permit me to call them asterisks, or something of that kind. If only they all shone, it would be less absurd—but they don't! And to-day we have "movie" stars, which is abominable. As a matter of fact, the form of entertainment known as "vaudeville" is the sanest to deal with. In vaudeville, the leading artist is a "headliner."

At this very precise moment of writing, there are five exceedingly eminent young women who would be highly indignant if I were to question their right to be called stars. They betinsel and bespangle the current list of attractions, and they are interesting in various ways. The system that makes stars of industrious and pleasant young women need not be examined to-day. Managers explain it thus: "We are merely trying to establish a name as a brand. People out of town demand brands. That is all there is to it." It sounds a bit like the other extreme, doesn't it? It puts all these charming players on the same level as soap, tooth paste, and face powder.

However, I am bound to assume that certain leading actresses *are* stars, and I shall assume it. Otherwise, I should be plunged in horrid hot water, and I could not stand it. I do not intend to call them asterisks, though I should prefer to do it. They might be insulted, which would be calamitous.

The five young women who are shedding luster upon the world at this moment are Maude Adams, Elsie Ferguson, Alla Nazimova, Frances Starr, and Julia Arthur, while the five plays that they irradiate with their charm are "A Kiss for Cinderella," by Barrie; "Shirley Kaye," by Hurlbert Footner; "Ception Shoals," by H. Austin Adams; "The Little Lady in Blue," by Horace Hodges and T. Wigney Percival; and "Seremonda," by William Lindsey. You are probably familiar with the portraits of the five actresses, and I dare say you have read their "views" upon everything from the temptations of the stage to the results of the war, with a few remarks upon astronomy, gastronomy, and logarithms thrown in for good value. If all this has eluded you—well, your education has been woefully neglected.

If any actress could logically be called a star—and likewise a moon or a sun—I should unhesitatingly say that she was Maude Adams. Miss Adams is really an institution, like the Brooklyn Bridge or the Woolworth Building, and one cannot sit down in cold blood and criticize institutions. It would be so futile. This actress has twinkled for a very long time, and, I sincerely trust, will continue to twinkle. I am convinced that she would not mind in the least if I called her an asterisk. It wouldn't matter.

I went to see her in "A Kiss for Cinderella," just as I should have gone to see her if she had elected to play *Topsy* in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and just as I *did* go to see her when she played *Juliet*. And surely she irradiated the Barrie play in her own inimitable way. In fact, Maude Adams *was* the Barrie play, and perhaps a good deal more. Barrie himself seemed to me to be a bit tired of being Barrie. It was as if he would have rejoiced if he could have been somebody else. He has been called "fantastic" and "whimsical" and

"quaint" for so long that the adjectives have evidently palled. It is such a dreadful thing to live up to a distinctive reputation! It is really a psychological horror. Kings and presidents have felt it! All through "A Kiss for Cinderella" one saw the effort made by the playwright to be odd and unusual. That he succeeded occasionally is certain, but then there was little Miss Adams to help him out. In a very delightful dream scene, at the close of the second act, Barrie was almost himself, and just as that fact became evident, he plied Miss Adams with a dance, and she rose—or pirouetted—to the occasion. This stamped the little play as a success. There was no doubt about it. Never before had Maude Adams danced, and she did it so gracefully and so artistically that, even in these vernoncastled times, we were entranced. The star shone for us. I forgot the little lunatic girl who called herself the moon.

As for Miss Elsie Ferguson, her position in the firmament is more recently acquired. She is the personification of youth and beauty. Those devoid of such qualities rarely star. Managers who demand a brand insist upon one that is pictorially excellent. Intelligence and dramatic perception are of secondary importance. Miss Ferguson, however, is not only young and pretty, but is possessed of acute intelligence. In her comedy, "Shirley Kaye," she had what writers call a stellar rôle. That means that all the "sympathy" of the audience was hers, all the situations, and all the dialogue. No well-appointed star will accept less. You may say that the "sympathy" of the audience—realizing what an audience frequently is—must be very unsatisfactory. It is nothing of the sort—it is most grateful and comforting to every star, and she is never happy without it. The audience *must* see her invariably doing the right thing.

In "Shirley Kaye," Miss Ferguson circumvented a material railroad owner "from the West," and saved her father from the financial ruin that stage fathers endure so neatly. And she was always "elegantly gowned." That means so much, you know. It is a great stimulus to the "sympathy" of the audience. Women rarely sympathize in their hearts with a heroine whose gowns leave anything to be desired. *Shirley* did wonderful things both socially and commercially, and with a love affair of conventional interest, she triumphed.

You may suggest, in your timid way, that any woman saddled with such a rôle must triumph. To that I reply that "any" woman would never get such a rôle. It would be against all precedents. Star parts are made to fit certain personalities—very carefully and diligently. The inflections of a star's voice, her mannerisms, her poses, and her dramatic powers—those last!—are all taken into consideration.

Miss Ferguson has a very peculiar voice. Men and women argue at dinner tables about that voice. Therefore, it is very important. The people who do not like it are just as useful as those who do. Personally I love Elsie Ferguson's voice; it is so unusual—it is neither English nor American. It is unique. Occasionally you set it down as ridiculously "haw-haw" and affected, and then you realize that it is neither. It is just—Elsie Ferguson.

If I were a manager, and starred nice ladies—which I do not imagine I should ever do; it is so bad for them!—I fancy I should pinnacle Miss Ferguson for the sake of that adorably titillant voice. It is clear, dominant, and excessively attractive in these days of nasal and adenoidal tones. I should ply her with epigram, and revel in her enunciation. If anybody could fall in love with a voice—and I've heard that some people can

—I should imagine that Elsie Ferguson would be loved inordinately.

"Shirley Kaye" without Elsie Ferguson would have been as impossible as "A Kiss for Cinderella" without Miss Adams. Those who are called stars rise superior to their plays. It is rough on the drama, but very pleasant for the stars themselves.

Madame Nazimova, who Ibnsened herself into fame, is quite unlike either Maude Adams or Elsie Ferguson. She rarely affects the plays that critics call "sweet and wholesome." She prefers the enigmatic, the problematic, and the interrogational. That does not mean that she dispenses with the "sympathy" of the audience—far from it! I am bound to remark that the American starring system has not improved the "art" of Madame Nazimova. When she first appeared here, she wotted little of the "center of the stage," the "fat" of the situations, and all those delicacies. She was satisfied to efface herself artistically, and to indulge in dramatic renunciation, for the sake of the play. But to-day the star's the thing!

"Ception Shoals" amused me. When I heard that the Young Person was warned against it in the advertisements, it exhilarated me. The warning, of course, was a furtive invitation to the Old Person. The selfish Old Person *always* hankers for things that are denied the Young Person, and I think it is frightfully mean of him.

In Mr. H. Austin Adams' play, Madame Nazimova appeared as a maiden who had been kept all her life in a lighthouse, by a tyrannical uncle. She knew none of the "mysteries" of life. These, according to Mr. Adams, can never be unraveled in a lighthouse. She was flamboyantly innocent, and really extremely silly. Her ideas on motherhood were so droll—and they seemed even more so in the vicinity of Forty-second Street—that our sense of humor emerged. If a mere lighthouse can do

such wonderful things for any young girl, then I say—beware of lighthouses. They are *not* as light as they are painted.

The benevolent Mr. Adams of course preached the doctrine that she should have been "told"—he would probably teach a hen that she must cross the street in order to get to the other side—and the dear old doctrine, ancient as the hills, but not as picturesque, was trotted out again. The assumption that all i's must be dotted for rational human girls is very popular with the modern playwright who has a mission. Surely, even on an island "off Southern California," this girl could scarcely have escaped the enlightenment of the pervasive "movies." If this were possible in Mr. Adams' realm, for goodness' sake, let me go there for a holiday!

"Ception Shoals" was really quite funny. In the last act, the poor young thing, who had never been "told" that she was a girl and might become a lady, sang a song to a rag baby, let down her back hair, went stark, staring mad—they *never* go mad with their hair nicely waved—and wandered out into the depths! A man loved her dearly, but tyrannical uncle had intercepted letters, and the man who might have been the father of her child—*not* of her rag baby—believed she was dead. I love the dear old intercepted letters! They remind me of the days when I was young, tiddley-um. They seemed like the good old times. Still, while this peculiar heroine did not win my sympathy—really, I prefer knaves to fools—she probably won that of her audiences. One Young Person who accompanied me on the opening night laughed heartily throughout the performance. That may have been the reason why future Young Persons were

advised to stay away. You see, the Young Person to-day will not stand any nonsense. She leaves that for her more unworldly and appreciative parents, who are so readily and willingly gulled.

This rôle in "Ception Shoals" was of course a star part. I wonder what Madame Nazimova would have thought of it in her Ibsen days! To be sure, she played it delightfully, but she suggested the sort of girl whose intuition would have elucidated everything. It is very hard to find any other brand of actress to-day. Once upon a time, there was Miss Annie Russell.

Of little Miss Frances Starr, in "The Little Lady in Blue," I think I said all that was necessary last month. As she is a twinkler, I am anxious to acknowledge that circumstance, and I do it, and I may add that her task was no easy one.

Last constellation of my five—Miss Julia Arthur, in "Seremonda," with twelfth-century and blankest verse as accessories.

Seremonda was most beautiful and blondely wigged, but she did not love her husband. He had killed her intended bridegroom and had then dragged her to his castle. Do you think that she *should* have loved him? Even in the twelfth century it is my opinion—just an opinion—that girls would be girls. Later on, this unloved husband actually killed poor *Seremonda's* lover, and then served up the lad's heart in a golden receptacle for *Seremonda* to eat. And in those days, mind you, I don't suppose the cooking was any too good! So *Seremonda* killed herself, and—that's all. Poor *Seremonda*! Poor Julia Arthur! A really admirable actress wasted on the twelfth century! Such are stars! And once I danced with the moon!



Talks With Ainslee's Readers

WE are often asked by young writers just what AINSLEE's wants. Well, suppose we were to say that we would like a mystery that will baffle the most sophisticated reader until the very end, skillfully interwoven with a sprightly love story full of bright dialogue, the whole written with the epigrammatic brilliance of an Edgar Saltus? You might well ask, "Why not go fishing for boneless shad? You have as much chance of catching one as the other." But the odd thing about it is that we have just such a novelette in the office now, all set up and waiting to go forth in the May AINSLEE's. "The Impostor" is the name of it, and the author is Edgar Saltus himself.



IN this number you have read the opening article of Albert Payson Terhune's "Men of Mystery" series. For May, he writes of "Saint-Germain, the Man Who Could Not Die." We can hardly be expected to accept as true the story of a man's drifting down the ages with the awful immortality of Sue's "Wandering Jew." Yet we know that this was generally believed of the mysterious young man who came from no one knows where to the court of Louis XV. in 1748. We know that he was recognized by the respectable old Baroness de Gergy as a man of the same age that she had known in Venice fifty years before, and that they recalled intimate details of their former friendship. We know that he recalled incidents in the days of monarchs who ruled centuries before, and that, as if

with remorse, he shuddered whenever he saw a crucifix. He was familiar with all ancient languages, and scholars were unable to trip him up. He was identified by a credible witness among the prisoners of the Reign of Terror in 1793, and was supposed to have been seen in the Crimean War and our own Civil War, always, apparently, about the same age. Incredible, of course, and yet his story is built up out of the testimony of witnesses whose word would be accepted in any court of law.

Unusual short fiction in AINSLEE's for May will include "Art Is Long," a love story by Fanny Heaslip Lea; "Blind Man's Buff," a characteristic tale by Bonnie Ginger, author of "About One Out of Four," and "The House of Cobwebs," a weird and beautiful romance by Melville Chater, who wrote "The Rock-a-Bye Pine."



AN entertaining magazine with an unattractive cover is like a beautiful woman in a dowdy dress. This month we think we can appreciate the satisfaction a woman must feel in the consciousness that she is becomingly gowned. Almost every color artist of note to-day has at some time contributed covers to AINSLEE's: Christie, Fisher, Flagg, Underwood, the late Philip Boileau, Miller, Stanlaws, the Kinneys, Ralph, Wenzell, Kimball, and Leyendecker, among them. An impressive array, and yet we feel that we have seldom gone forth as "well gowned" as we do this month with our first cover by Neysa McMein.

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Glance at the column containing the names of the stories. By

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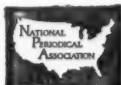
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to obtain renewed strength, power and endurance after the hardest fought political campaign of his life in which he was elected Congressman from the State of Illinois. The results he obtained from taking iron were so surprising that

SENATOR MASON NOW SAYS

Nuxated Iron should be made known to every nervous, run down, anaemic man, woman and child.

Opinion of Doctor Howard James, late of United States Public Health Service who has prescribed and thoroughly tested Nuxated Iron in his own private practice.

WHAT SENATOR MASON SAYS:

"I have often said I would never recommend medicine of any kind. I believe that the doctor's place. However, after the hardest political campaign of my life, without a chance for a vacation, I had been starting to court every morning with that horrible tired feeling one cannot describe. I was advised to try Nuxated Iron. As a pioneer in the pure food and drug legislation, I was at first loath to try an advertised remedy, but after advising with one of my medical friends, I gave it a test. The results have been so beneficial in my own case I made up my mind to let my friends know about it, and you are at liberty to publish this statement if you so desire. I am now sixty-five years of age, and I feel that a remedy which will build up the strength and increase the power of endurance of a man of my age should be known to every nervous, run-down anaemic man, woman and child."

Senator Mason's statement in regard to Nuxated Iron was shown to several physicians who were requested to give their opinions thereon.

Dr. Howard James, late of the United States Public Health Service, said:

"Senator Mason is to be commended on handing out this statement on Nuxated Iron for public print. There is nothing like organic iron—Nuxated Iron—to give increased strength, snap, vigor, and staying power. It enriches the blood, brings roses to the cheeks of women and is an unfailing source of renewed vitality, endurance and power for men who burn up too rapidly their nervous energy in the strenuous strain of the great business competition of the day."

Dr. E. Sauer, a Boston physician who has studied abroad in great European medical institutions, said:

"Senator Mason is right. As I have said a hundred times over, organic iron is the greatest of all strength builders. 'Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with the blood pressure of a boy of twenty and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact, a young man he really was, notwithstanding his age. The secret, he said, was taking organic iron—Nuxated Iron had filled him with renewed life. At thirty he was in bad health; at forty-six he was care-worn and nearly all in. Now at fifty, after taking Nuxated Iron, a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth."

"Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it, and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking. Just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron. If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next, take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again, and see how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous, run-down people who were ailing all the while double their strength and endurance and entirely rid themselves of all symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time simply by taking iron in the proper form. And this, after they had in some cases been doctoring for months

without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron, iron acetate or tincture of iron simply to save a few cents. The iron demanded by Mother Nature for the red coloring matter in the blood of her children is, alas! not that kind of iron. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless.

Dr. Schuyler C. Jaques, Visiting Surgeon of St. Elizabeth's Hospital, New York City, said: "I have never before given out any medical information or advice for publication, as I ordinarily do not believe in it. But in the case of Nuxated Iron I feel I would be remiss in my duty not to mention it. I have taken it myself and given it to my patients with most surprising and satisfactory results. And those who wish quickly to increase their strength, power and endurance will find it a most remarkable and wonderfully effective remedy."

NOTE—Nuxated Iron which is prescribed and recommended above by physicians in such a great variety of cases, is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists and whose iron constituents are widely prescribed by eminent physicians both in Europe and America. Unlike the older inorganic iron products it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in nuxated iron that they offer to forfeit \$100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 60 who lacks iron, and increase their strength 200 per cent or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.



Former United States Senator Wm. E. Mason, recently elected Member of the U. S. Congress from Illinois

Senator Mason's championship of Pure Food and his fight for the rural free delivery system, and his strong advocacy of all bills favoring labor and the rights of the masses as against trusts and combines, made him a national figure at Washington and endeared him to the hearts of the working man and the great masses of people throughout the United States. Senator Mason has the distinction of being one of the really big men of the nation. His strong endorsement of Nuxated Iron must convince any intelligent thinking reader that it must be a preparation of very great merit and one which the Senator feels is bound to be of great value to the masses of people everywhere, otherwise he could not afford to lend his name to it, especially after his strong advocacy of pure food and drug legislation.

Since Nuxated Iron has obtained such an enormous sale—over three million people using it annually—other iron preparations are recommended as a substitute for it. The reader should remember that there is a vast difference between ordinary metallic iron and the organic iron contained in Nuxated Iron, therefore always insist on having Nuxated Iron, as recommended by Dr. Howard James, late of the United States Public Health Service, Dr. Schuyler C. Jaques, Visiting Surgeon of St. Elizabeth's Hospital, New York, and other physicians.

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Tobacco Tells on Nervous System



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Tobacco Steals from You the Pleasures, Comforts, Luxuries of Life

Tobacco Habit Banished In 48 to 72 Hours

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It doesn't make a particle of difference whether you've been a user of tobacco for a single month or 60 years, or how much you use, or in what form you use it. Whether you smoke cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chew plug or fine cut or use snuff—**Tobacco Redeemer** will positively remove all craving for tobacco in any form in from 48 to 72 hours. Your tobacco craving will begin to decrease after the very first dose—there's no long waiting for results.

Tobacco Redeemer contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind and is the most marvelously quick, absolutely scientific and thoroughly reliable remedy for the tobacco habit.

Not a Substitute

Tobacco Redeemer is in no sense a substitute for tobacco, but is a radical, efficient treatment. After finishing the treatment you have absolutely no desire to use tobacco again or to continue the use of the remedy. It quiets the nerves, and will make you feel better in every way. If you really want to quit the tobacco habit—get rid of it so completely that when you see others using it, it will not awaken the slightest desire in you—you should at once begin a course of **Tobacco Redeemer** treatment for the habit.

Results Absolutely Guaranteed

A single trial will convince the most skeptical. Our legal, binding, money-back guarantee goes with each full treatment. If **Tobacco Redeemer** fails to banish the tobacco habit when taken according to the plain and easy directions, your money will be cheerfully refunded upon demand.

Let Us Send You Convincing Proof

If you're a slave of the tobacco habit and want to find a sure, quick way of quitting "for keeps" you owe it to yourself and to your family to mail the coupon below or send your name and address on a postal and receive our free booklet on the deadly effect of tobacco on the human system, and positive proof that **Tobacco Redeemer** will quickly free you from the habit.

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Free Book Coupon

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the girl has made a crude doll out of a piece of wood and a few rags. The man objects to this rival for her affections and his attempt to destroy the doll is their first quarrel. In the unfolding drama of their existence is focused the passions, the virtues, the joys and sorrows that have marked the race of man in his struggle from the cave days through the ages of time.

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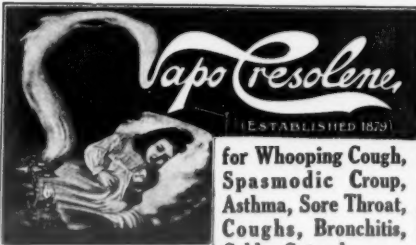
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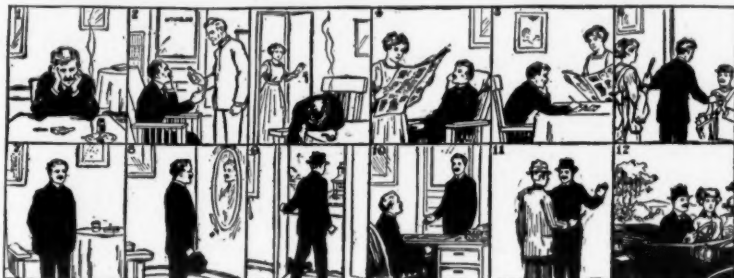
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"My hair has quit falling out, my scalp itches no more and new hair is growing thickly."—Mrs. J. Lundeen, Multnomah Co., Oregon.

"After being bald 20 years, my head is mostly covered with new hair; am well pleased."—Geo. Van Wyck, Union Co., N. J.

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"My daughter's hair grew four inches in two months. She is very enthusiastic in her recommendation of Koskott, as she thought her hair had been irreparably injured by a severe fever she had six years ago. Although she had tried many well-known and widely advertised hair tonics, Koskott is the first hair preparation to start a new growth of hair on her head."—Mrs. J. Dindinger (daughter's photo below).



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